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# Editorial

This edition of *Fine Print* is full of good reading to see you through summer and into 2008. The Editorial Committee hopes you enjoy this summer edition of *Fine Print*.

In 'Reflections of the power of AND' Corinna Ridley takes us to the 2007 International Adult Literacy Conference held recently in New Zealand. For those readers who couldn't make it to Aotearoa, Corinna gives us the next best thing—an in-depth and insightful overview of the conference.

Stephen Black from TAFE NSW Northern Sydney Institute reports on some early findings in a current National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) project entitled, 'Literacy and numeracy development in partnership: Social capital approaches'. The project examines partnerships between LLN providers and various policy sectors in different states and territories, and focuses in particular on the social capital outcomes from these partnerships.

VALBEC celebrates 30 years as a professional association next year, and the current VALBEC committee has commissioned Beverley Campbell to compile its history. In this edition Beverley writes about the VALBEC history project she is currently working on, and gives a glimpse into how the project is taking shape. It details the history of the changing nature of VALBEC and pays tribute to all those who have made VALBEC the organic and vital organisation it has become.

Music and singing is the central theme of our three articles in Practical Matters. The first article, by Jane Coker from Community Music Victoria, details a talk with Fay White and Anne-Marie Holley, two rural Victorian women who have formed a partnership that has grown a unique singing culture based on the Vocal Nosh model. The project has attracted the interest of the Department of Victorian Communities and ArtsVictoria as well as VicHealth, and is now training and supporting singing leaders and helping the community at large understand, enjoy and promote the benefits of singing together.

Chris Falk facilitates singing and songwriting groups in her work with ALBE and ESL students at NMIT in Melbourne. In her article 'Contagious Happiness' she shares with us her

reflections on how singing sessions make both students and teachers happier. Chris shows that through song, learning a language seems naturally easier. Chris also ran the 'Songs and Meaning' workshop at this year's VALBEC conference.

Lyndal Chambers has written about one of her ongoing projects with Community Music Victoria. She has been working with teachers of English as a Second Language, sharing her knowledge and experiences. She explains the many reasons why singing is a useful tool in learning a language, and how it gives students and teachers a feeling of wellbeing as well as being fun and engaging.

Debbie Soccio provides the next instalment in her Technology Matters series on how to work with PowerPoint. Open Forum features an edited text of 'Then and now: Issues for women in TAFE', Helen Macrae's opening address to the Women in Adult and Vocational Education's national conference in Sydney in May 2007.

Also in Open Forum, Jacinta Agostinelli reflects on her experience of the new CGEA. Jacinta covers both the positives and the obstacles that she sees in the new CGEA, and notes that most of the change has been felt at an administrative level rather than by the students themselves. *Fine Print* welcomes further discussion of the new CGEA as more providers start to implement it.

Summer holidays are a great time to unwind, to read and to reflect. *Fancy Footwork* comes highly recommended on the reading list. Robyn Hodge, *Fine Print's* former editor, offers her review of *Fancy Footwork*: adult educators thinking on their feet. This extraordinary collection of writings is a result of weekend discussions and subsequent reflections by a committed group of adult educators based in Melbourne. Robyn describes *Fancy Footwork* as a perfect example of the complexity of what happens in teaching and learning and the process by which this complexity is captured.

Also reviewed, by Debbie Soccio, is a set of five A5 books suitable for adult literacy and ESL learners titled *Read Series Two*. The series, produced by Smith and Wilson and distributed  
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**The Victorian Adult Literacy and Basic Education Council (VALBEC) aims to lead the adult literacy field through identifying issues of importance to practitioners and facilitating positive change. This is achieved through networking, professional support, the sharing of information and the promotion of best practice.**

# Reflections on the power of AND: the 2007 International Adult Literacy Conference

by Corinna Ridley

When the 2007 International Adult Literacy Conference was held in New Zealand, Corinna Ridley was there to report for Fine Print.

‘Ka nui nga mihi kia a koutou...Greetings to you all’, were the words on the opening page of the 2007 International Adult Literacy Conference navigator journal, and it was this mix of Maori and English culture and language that was to be the mark of this remarkable conference, which really did demonstrate ‘the power of and’.

Firstly, the conference was the first of its kind to be organised by four distinct organisations, three from New Zealand (Workbase, Literacy Aotearoa, and ESOL Home Tutors) and ACAL from Australia. The conference committee managed to organise an interesting and relevant program for practitioners from both countries, but with a definite New Zealand flavour with prominent NZ politicians and activists on the program alongside presenters from the US and Canada. There was even a conference facilitator, Ed Bernacki from the appropriately named Idea Factory, who challenged us to find ways of making sure we got real value from being at the conference by suggesting we put a dollar value on everything we took home: \$5 for every new contact, \$50 for every new idea, and so on.

Bernacki is the designer of the radically different ‘conference journal’ that replaced the usual set of abstracts and workshop schedule found at most conferences with a practical little notebook with biographical information about keynote speakers, space for taking notes, and prompts to get you thinking about how to make this a conference where you took away more than a few handouts or promotional sheets that you never looked at again. Ed popped up throughout the program with suggested new ways of thinking about other things too, including cognitive diversity in problem solving, skills for innovative thinking and ways of turning ideas into actions.

## A helpful facilitator

The inclusion of a conference facilitator, whose purpose was to help conference delegates make the most of their attendance at the conference, was innovative and handled well, not taking up too much time and leaving us all with some new insights into how to manage our own conference experience. For more about Ed Bernacki’s approaches and ideas, visit <http://www.ideafactory.com.au/inside.asp>.

Ed’s conference journal included a section of getting the most from keynote speeches—whether they are inspirational, informative, entertaining, familiar or leading edge. In fact the first keynote speaker of the conference was all of those things, and a rare person indeed—a politician with a sense of humour. The Honourable Marian Hobbs was impressive in her obvious familiarity with what was happening on the ground in literacy in New Zealand, and in her understanding of the field more broadly. She spoke of the New Zealand National Adult Literacy strategy, her intention to lobby for additional professional development for both literacy tutors and vocational teachers who need to be able to address literacy and numeracy in their classes, and identified the goal of full literacy as meaning the ability to ‘understand the word and the world’ and being able to express yourself fully.

**Maori culture was inherently good at ‘AND’; that is, at adding rather than subtracting**

Marian Hobbs was not the only politician to demonstrate a grass roots understanding of issues in the field and a down-to-earth approach that was refreshingly different to the political gloss we are so used to in Australia. The conference dinner address was given by Dr Pita Sharples, co-leader of the Maori party, who spoke passionately and eloquently from a Maori perspective on the conference theme, pointing out that Maori culture was inherently good at ‘AND’; that is, at adding rather than subtracting. He concluded his speech by inviting all those present to stand and join in singing a traditional Maori song that was an appropriate ending to his speech, which was much about how all New Zealanders, regardless of origin, could move towards the future together.

Perhaps this is the time to reflect on the most striking feature of the ‘Power of and’ conference—for an Australian—the presence of Maori culture and language, seemingly interwoven with Western culture and English. Throughout the conference

Maori and Western delegates exchanged greetings in Maori, included Maori blessings in the proceedings, acknowledged each other in traditional ways and peppered their conversations with Maori phrases and words. The place of Maori language and culture went far beyond the traditional *powhiri* opening ceremony, in which our representatives were welcomed by the *tangata whenua* (hosts), with a speech in both Maori and English and with songs, handshaking and touching of noses and foreheads. Rather it pervaded the entire event, being inclusive of all New Zealanders, who appear to share at least some understanding of common Maori words, stories and culture. While the New Zealanders I spoke to still felt that Maori people had a long way to go in their continuing struggle for equality and that the road to where they are now has been hard fought, as an Australian, shamed by the status and treatment of Aboriginal peoples, it was a painful reminder of how it could be if we all embraced Aboriginal culture and language, and just how far we are from realising this ideal.

### **Advice for Australia**

Professor Linda Smith, pro-vice chancellor Maori at the University of Waikato, spoke emotionally of some of the hard-won educational changes that have made a real difference to Maori people. Her talk touched on the need to teach to the aspirations of Maori children, who want to be doctors and space travellers, just like other kids, rather than their parents or teachers, who tended to have no vision for themselves or their children beyond learning to read or behaving better or getting a job, any job. She led us through the establishment of Maori language schools, which started illegally but which are now supported by state funding, and on the importance of Maori making this happen for themselves. The recurring theme of her talk was that you could not participate in society if you have your culture, language, beliefs and values taken away. One delegate asked Professor Smith what advice she would give to the Australians in the audience about how to bring about similar changes for Aboriginal communities, having no underpinning treaty on which to argue for fundamental rights and no single unifying Aboriginal language. She advised that we should use what we have, and that in her view there were many emerging articulate and inspiring Aboriginal leaders in the community, and that these people would lead the way.

Another conference highlight was the address by Doctor Heide Spruck Wrigley from the US, but also working in Canada, who spoke on the theme of ‘bringing the outside in—connecting literacy to learners’ lives’. Her talk acknowledged the need to teach for both meaning and accuracy, but talked about how this could be achieved through a framework that aimed to connect learning to the real world. She advocated the use of authentic materials and project-based learning, and gave some examples of how this had been achieved in New Mexico with students crossing the border to work on community projects as a part of their program.

Many of the themes of Dr Spruck Wrigley’s talk reflected the approach advocated by a number of Victorian curriculum initiatives such as the Victorian Certificate in Applied Learning (VCAL), which also recognises the impact of contextualising literacy and learning in the real world. Dr Spruck Wrigley also touched on the growing understanding about learning that we are gaining from studying online gaming, which effectively provides a hands-on, just-in-time, cognitive apprenticeship to learning with built-in rewards and clear goals—and which are learnt apparently effortlessly by so many (but remain a mystery to a few of us now branded as late adopters, or worse still resisters!). Perhaps appropriately reinforcing the potential of new technology, Dr Spruck Wrigley’s address was simultaneously heard in Australia through the ACAL Literacy Live classroom by a group attending a VALBEC professional development day in the east of Melbourne.

**Dr Spruck Wrigley also touched on the growing understanding about learning that we are gaining from studying online gaming**

Dr Spruck Wrigley’s presentation was also accompanied by many images of students demonstrating how to cook spaghetti, of ways of assessing literacy and language levels using everyday materials such as a coca-cola can and a McDonald’s menu, and touched on what she referred to as the ‘Trinity’ required for learning: Engagement (social, emotional and cognitive), Focus (being explicit about what students need to know) and Practice (in meaningful and diverse contexts).

### **A program for young people**

Many of Dr Spruck Wrigley’s points were picked up in the session led by Jim Powrie on the Canadian National Youth Literacy Demonstration project, which they co-developed and implemented. The project was designed to offer a program that would be able to re-engage young people who had identified poor literacy skills at around the age of 15. The program took these children out of school and into an alternative program for a two-year period with the intention of reintegrating them into mainstream at the end of the second year. The key features of the program included having a teacher and teacher aide for each group, a counsellor able to work with both the children and their families, the use of lots of technology in learning, and an explicit focus on teaching how to learn and how to learn to read and write. The entire program was underpinned by adult learning principles and pedagogy and was conducted over four days, with the fifth day being used by staff to develop individual managed programs

with students, meet to discuss student progress and plan for subsequent sessions.

## they emphasised the value of using team teaching instead of a withdrawal approach

The gains from the program were perhaps summarised best by one parent who said: ‘These kids were struggling as people: now they believe in themselves’, supporting Jim Powrie’s observation that although there were literacy gains, the most significant change in the students was attitudinal. The program differed from many others that target disadvantaged youth, in having reintegration into mainstream as its primary goal. Many of the audience were interested in the cost of the program, which appeared to be relatively expensive—involving two teachers and a counsellor for each group, but it was argued that because it was targeted at a relatively small cohort of young people, it could be seen to be a cost effective way of re-engaging those who were in danger of leaving the system. More details of the project can be found at [www.youthliteracy.ca](http://www.youthliteracy.ca).

The second day of the conference started somewhat unconventionally with a numeracy breakfast that coupled practical numeracy activities and ideas with eggs, bacon, toast and cereal. Dave Tout and Beth Marr were able to show just how misleading means and averages can be by getting the more than 100 delegates who chose to attend the breakfast to organise themselves in order of experience in teaching numeracy. The mean was about 16 years, but only one person had actually taught for 16 years, with the data being distorted by the many people attending who had little or no numeracy teaching experience.

With this timely reminder on the need to interpret statistics with care, delegates attended on the same day a presentation on the forthcoming publication of the outcomes of Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey, (ALLS), which will provide Australia and New Zealand with updated figures on adult literacy and numeracy levels. Ways in which the field can use the statistics from this survey, and ways in which others might use them, was the topic of much discussion. The 1996 survey of adult literacy made a dramatic difference to the provision of literacy in New Zealand, leading to the development of the National Adult Literacy Strategy and considerable increases in funding for what until that time had been a largely voluntary sector. While the impact of the survey in Australia (Aspects of Literacy<sup>1</sup>) was not nearly so significant, it provided a basis from which to argue for continuing funding for adult literacy for the next decade.

However, the possibility that the figures could work against us was raised, with a reminder that when the ALLS survey data was released in Canada and showed no improvement in adult literacy rates, funding was cut dramatically from the sector on the basis that a decade of targeted programs had produced no measurable outcomes.

Statistics can be a double-edged sword, it seems, when the same data can be used both for and against the provision of government-funded adult literacy programs. When the Australian data is released in November this year, practitioners and providers need to be prepared as we may well be caught between a rock and a hard place where an increase (or no decrease) in adult literacy rates is seen as a failure of programs to address the problem, and a decrease is seen as a reason to cut the number of programs and we become victims of our own ‘success’. Rather, it would seem the best course of action will be to argue against simplistic interpretations of the data such as these in favour of a more in-depth consideration of what the figures are really telling us about the impact of adult literacy on individuals, health, industry, economy and society. For more information on the publication of the ALLS survey go to [http://www.connected.gov.au/case\\_studies/adult\\_literacy\\_and\\_lifeskills\\_survey](http://www.connected.gov.au/case_studies/adult_literacy_and_lifeskills_survey).

### Literacy and other outcomes

The ways in which literacy impacts on industry and vocational outcomes was a theme picked up in a number of workshop presentations at the conference. A team from Manukau Institute of Technology offered insights into their approach to team teaching with vocational teachers in trade courses, including their practical ‘how to’ kit for both vocational and literacy teachers. They emphasised the value of using team teaching instead of a withdrawal approach, which ensured that literacy became a normal part of the course, that the interventions were relevant and totally integrated and contextualised within the course. They also stressed the need to form strong relationships with vocational teachers, and to become increasingly involved in planning classes and materials in order to be seen as equal in the classroom and not a teacher’s aide.

Taking a totally different approach were a team from the University of Waikato who spoke about ‘embedded foundation learning and social practice approaches to literacy’, first from a theoretical perspective and then through sharing examples of some current pilot projects in which workplace trainers are embedding literacy instruction into on-the-job training.

The theory behind the approach stressed the increasing recognition of the importance of context and ensuring that literacy was seen as purposeful and meaning-making through using real life texts. The speakers also talked about the importance of considering what resources are available in any

particular workplace to support literacy and learning, such as workplace networks and social supports and ways of expanding skills and knowledge. It was also noted that workers need to have additional skills to be able to learn in the workplace, including ways of interacting with others and with the work environment, ways of coping with new challenges, and the ability to recognise and take up opportunities. As an example of how workplaces and individuals can encounter difficulties in learning at work, the speakers talked of a young woman who was isolated at work, given tasks to do but no guidance or support to complete them, and was struggling to learn new skills in isolation. Progress in gaining additional English language and literacy skills for this person was limited by her lack of workplace networks and understanding of the culture of this particular workplace, and despite the fact that she appeared to be surrounded by opportunities to learn additional language skills through interactions with colleagues, this had not occurred.

### **The growth of learning**

The increasing prominence of learning in the workplace across the post-compulsory education sector in Australia may need to consider the implications of these findings. They suggest that many people may need to learn specific skills for learning in the workplace before being able to maximise the opportunities offered through this approach, and that while learning in the workplace appears to be very effective for those with these skills, it may present new challenges for some who have previously performed well in the structured formal classroom environment. Finally, in this session the positive outcomes of a controversial pilot project in which trainers from a road work company were given additional training in embedding literacy skill development in their leadership course were discussed. Arguments for the approach centred on the value of having trainers who already know the industry and the workers delivering the program and on the capacity of this approach to embed foundation learning into vocational courses, skills which many workers would not consider relevant outside of this context. Arguments against raised the issue that the trainers were not highly trained adult literacy specialists, and would have limited capacity therefore to address the literacy needs of the workers.

**many ESL teachers  
have struggled to assist  
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mother tongue literacy**

I was reminded during this presentation of the inclusion of the literacy elective in the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment, which aims to raise the awareness of workplace

trainers and vocational teachers of the possible literacy needs of students and ways of ensuring that the literacy demands of the course (in terms of reading text books and completing written assignments, for example) are not significantly greater or distinct to the literacy demands of the job or trade. However this elective does not prepare these trainers to teach literacy, as has been done in the New Zealand model. The roadworkers' pilot project has not yet been evaluated in terms of literacy gains for participants, and its success has been measured through monitoring completion of the vocational course. It was argued, however, that industry and individuals are content with this outcome alone and consider that literacy gains are relevant only where they relate to the person's ability to complete the vocational course and develop and apply the vocational skills. For more information on the New Zealand approaches to learning at work, see [www.learningforwork.com](http://www.learningforwork.com).

### **Learners from less literate cultures**

The final presentation I would like to share was about something totally different, but no less relevant to the Australian context, and reported on the success of the use of bilingual assistants in low-level ESL literacy classes. In recent years many ESL teachers have struggled to assist learners who have no mother tongue literacy or who come from a non-literate culture. In this presentation, Jenny Field and Dorothy Thwaites gave a short summary of the theories that had underpinned the development of the mother tongue and ESOL pilot program. This included reference to the importance of recognising that literacy impacts on the ways in which we think and learn, and that learning to become literate in a second language, is therefore also about learning literate ways of thinking and learning<sup>2</sup>. For example in an oral culture, what you know is what you can remember, because you can't look things up in a book. In addition, oral thought processes tend to be additive rather than subordinate, aggregative rather than analytic, and inclined to favour balance and equilibrium and be empathetic and participatory rather than objective.

Literate practices encourage the development of a more objective stance as print has an existence of its own, can be refined over time, and separate the reader and writer. In the pilot project, bilingual teachers aides were used to support learners in their acquisition of English literacy, offering translations of more abstract concepts and ideas, classroom instructions, learner concerns and assisting students to question when they did not understand. Some of the limitations on using this approach are immediately obvious, including the need for a monolingual group of students (or least one with a common language) and the cost of providing a bilingual assistant. In the pilot project the teacher's aides were trained, but not paid for their work in the program. The outcomes of the pilot, however, did demonstrate that the group of learners who had had bilingual support had made significantly greater literacy and language

**Continued on page 23 ...**

# Partnerships for social capital outcomes: literacy and the health sector

by Stephen Black

**A current National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) project, 'Literacy and numeracy development in partnership: Social capital approaches' (Black, Balatti & Falk, forthcoming), examines partnerships between Language, Literacy and Numeracy (LLN) providers and various policy sectors in different states and territories with a focus on the social capital outcomes from these partnerships. Early findings examine LLN/health sector partnerships in NSW, but the completed report will also include LLN/justice sector partnerships in the Northern Territory, and LLN/finance sector partnerships in Queensland.**

The project discussed in this paper follows from a previous NCVER-funded project undertaken by the authors which examined social capital outcomes from literacy and numeracy courses in the formal VET sector (Balatti, Black & Falk 2006). This current project extends the examination of social capital outcomes to cross-sectoral partnership programs, with a more in-depth analysis of the adult LLN pedagogy that results in social capital outcomes. This will be undertaken using action research methods.

## Literature review

The key areas of background research for this study include studies of 'health literacy', recent policy directions for cross-sectoral, integrated and community-based adult LLN provision with a particular focus on partnerships, and social capital outcomes from adult LLN courses.

### Literacy, health and 'health literacy'

It seems almost self-evident that LLN provision should be linked closely with the health sector given the long held view that people with low LLN skills suffer greater health disadvantages in the general community, along with disadvantages in other areas such as poverty, unemployment and crime (for example, Hartley 1989). More recently, health has been flagged as one of the key sectors which derive social and economic benefits from improved LLN skills, and where there is considerable scope for partnerships between LLN providers and the health sector (Figgis 2004, Hartley & Horne 2006).

The concept of health literacy is important in these discussions, though we need to be mindful that this project is about adult LLN links with the health sector, which is more encompassing. The project includes, for example, those who work in the health sector.

As an indication of the astonishing popularity of the concept of health literacy, a Google search at the time of writing this paper revealed close to 20 million hits. Although definitions of health literacy vary, it is usually presented within a 'functional' sense involving an individual's capacity to read and comprehend

medical information and instructions (see Shohot 2004: 67). Much of the interest in health literacy has been generated in the United States (for example, Nielsen-Bohlman et al. 2004) and in particular by large pharmaceutical companies such as Pfizer (2006) with their obvious interest in how people access health products. Canada (see Rootman & Ronson 2005) has been very active with health literacy initiatives and there is considerable interest in Europe generally (Kickbusch et al. 2006).

To a large extent, theoretical approaches to health literacy mirror those relating to literacy generally. There are narrow 'functional' approaches which focus on improving basic skills and making material easier to read, and there are broader 'empowerment' or 'critical' approaches (see Shohot 2004: 78) drawing largely on the work of researchers such as Nutbeam (1999), Freebody and Freiberg (1997) and Hohn (1998). In this latter approach, individuals and groups demonstrate increased power and autonomy over their own health needs as a challenge to the medical orthodoxy, in which clients are expected to remain largely compliant and passive (Cuban 2006). Some recent health literacy research draws on the theoretical approach of the 'New Literacy Studies' (for example Barton 2007, Barton & Hamilton 1998, Barton, Hamilton & Ivanic 2000) in which literacy, or more accurately literacies, are seen as social practices and therefore 'situated' contextually. Within this approach the focus is on how people access health information and services using their local community networks (Green 2007).

At this stage in Australia, it would be fair to say that health literacy initiatives have been largely driven by the health sector since the early 1990s when it was identified as a national health target (Nutbeam 1993), and the main focus has been on improving ease of access to information (for example, rewriting pamphlets). From a health sector perspective there are few examples of health and LLN professionals working together. Health literacy has also become more specialised in recent years with, for example, extended concepts such as mental health literacy (Jorm et al. 2006), maternal health literacy (Renkert & Nutbeam 2001), and diabetes literacy (Black, forthcoming). Health professionals are currently pointing to the need for more

research in the area of health literacy (Keleher & Hagggar 2007) and at least one state health system (Department of Human Services 2006) is providing some research funding.

### Health sector workers

A broader link between LLN provision and the health sector involves those who work in the health sector. In particular, the lower-skilled/AQF level workers in the health sector; the care workers, cleaning and catering staff for example, are often in need of improved LLN skills, especially in light of the training involved with new accreditation and compliance requirements in the health sector (Wyse & Casarotto 2004). This aspect of workplace LLN has been addressed to some degree with Commonwealth-funded WELL (Workplace English Language and Literacy) programs. However, there has been no national approach comparable to the United Kingdom where 'life skills' (which include LLN) have been embedded within the workforce structures of the health and social care sectors (Weston 2006).

### Cross-sectoral partnerships

The adult LLN field has been alerted to the potential for collaborative work in the health sector (Hartley & Horne 2006), but the problem has been described largely as one of gaining the interest of a poorly resourced health sector (Figgis 2004). The adult LLN field has also been provided with the elements of the most effective model for this type of collaborative work. Wickert and McGuirk (2005) indicate that the future for LLN will involve a shift away from stand-alone institutional provision to community capacity models involving cross-sectoral partnerships with sectors such as health. They base their ideas largely on the success of overseas 'joined-up' models in Birmingham in the UK (Bateson 2003) and New Orleans (Cowan 2004). LLN provision within these partnerships needs to be 'integrated' with the issues and problems involved in these sectors (McKenna & Fitzpatrick 2005). Cross-sectoral partnerships have been promoted heavily in VET research in recent years (Allison et al 2006, Billett et al 2005, Guenther et al 2006) and the most prominent characteristics of successful partnerships include trust and strong network relationships.

### Social capital outcomes

Social capital is usually a strong feature in the above community capacity models, and a recent NCVET-funded project by Balatti, Black and Falk (2006) suggests that social capital outcomes can result from adult literacy and numeracy course participation, and that they affect the socioeconomic wellbeing of the students and/or the community. Hence, social capital outcomes are useful and not merely a benign by-product of participation (p.39).

Social capital in these discussions is understood to mean 'networks, together with shared norms, values and understand-

ings which facilitate cooperation within or amongst groups' (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2004: 5). This focus on social capital outcomes is new in the adult LLN field (Black, Balatti & Falk 2006), and offers an alternative and potentially valuable means of considering the outcomes of adult LLN courses. Social capital outcomes were realised as a result of specific teaching strategies, such as promoting interaction with peers, and through the new networks and relationships experienced in the course. Balatti, Black and Falk (2007) indicate the need to reframe adult literacy and numeracy teaching/learning to include the idea of the student as a member of networks which would make the social capital-building function of the courses more explicit (see Figure 1).

To date this form of analysis has not extended beyond formal VET provision to promoting well-informed integrated literacy and numeracy provision in community-based programs—a research gap that this current project hopes to begin filling.

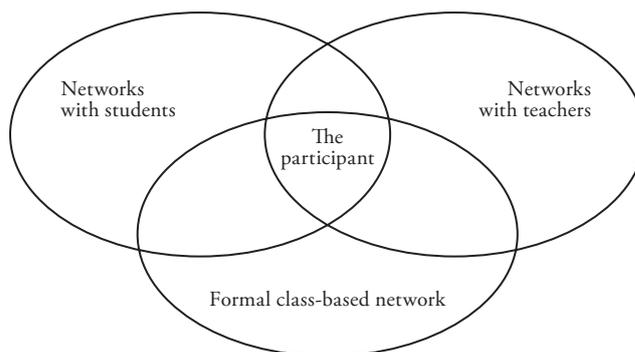
### Preliminary research findings

There are three main phases to the research project: Phase 1 involved a scan of the partnerships involving LLN providers and the health sector in the state of New South Wales to provide a profile of the kinds of partnerships operating. Phase 2 involves action research (Kemmis & McTaggart 1988) to trial strategies aimed at producing social capital outcomes in two LLN/health partnership programs. Phase 3 involves analysing the data and developing guidelines for innovative and effective approaches to adult LLN pedagogy that generate social capital outcomes. At the project's mid-way stage (during phase 2), data are being collected from the action research sites.

### A 'scan' for partnerships

This first research phase, scanning NSW for evidence of partnerships involving LLN providers and the health sector, was initially undertaken by email through the use of the national Reading Writing Hotline database. Additional email inquiries were made through TAFE NSW Institute Access Coordinators, the Access and General Education Curriculum Centre and the LLN coordinator for the NSW ACE sector.

**Figure 1: Participant membership of course-related networks**



There were surprisingly few partnerships found (between 20 and 30), and quite a few of these partnerships were not deemed suitable for this research because they did not involve a close working relationship between the partners. The most common partnership projects were funded under the Commonwealth WELL program involving, for example, LLN providers and aged care centres. In one TAFE institute alone, eight recent WELL-funded LLN/health partnerships were identified, mainly involving nursing homes. Six diverse partnership programs resulting from the scan were followed up in greater depth with telephone interviews. These programs involved LLN providers (mainly TAFE colleges) in partnership with:

- a rehabilitation program for recovering drug and alcohol clients in the Blue Mountains
- an Aboriginal drug and alcohol rehabilitation centre on the North Coast
- a residential child and adolescent unit in western Sydney
- a city-based health care organisation providing home care
- a Muslim women's centre and an area health service
- a city-based health centre for sex workers and intravenous drug users (IDUs).

Some of the key features found in these partnership programs included:

- The initiative for the partnership came from the LLN providers in the majority of the programs. It was rare for a health organisation to contact the LLN provider in the first instance (only one example was found). Mostly it was the LLN provider, aware of the availability of funding (for example, WELL or DEST literacy), who contacted a health organisation as part of a marketing or entrepreneurial activity.
- Usually partnership agreements were informal. There were no formal Memorandums of Agreement, though one was being contemplated at the time of interview.
- Effective partnerships required mutual trust and respect between the partners, and LLN providers needed to establish a close rapport with the needs of the health organisation.
- The degree of LLN 'integration' with the work of the health organisation varied. In some cases there was full integration in the sense that LLN became an accepted part of the service offered by the health organisation. In other cases the LLN program operated separately but within the overall umbrella of the health organisation.
- Flexibility in LLN provision (timetabling, resources, etc) was essential, and in every case what was taught had to be tailored to the needs of the health organisation.
- Role conflict for LLN staff in the partnership was common as teachers were unsure exactly where their role ended. For example, one LLN teacher stated, 'it's a fine line sometimes between being a listening ear and, you know, I'm not a trained counsellor; they've got counsellors'.

- Pedagogy varied, and was sometimes quite traditional, but what characterised every program was a form of 'pastoral care' philosophy long associated with LLN, and based on the individual needs of the students. It meant that in some cases the teaching was individually-based, teaching whoever turned up over a three or five hour period. This was the case in two rehabilitation programs.
- Funding was the main impediment to the partnership. Invariably it was short-term, and when it finished so did the program, despite its effectiveness. Alternatively, LLN providers needed to be inventive in securing funding, but it was rarely ongoing and thus longer term planning was not possible. In no cases did the health organisation provide funding (except indirectly through WELL).
- There were clear social capital outcomes, particularly in the form of trust between students and LLN staff and others, bonding between students on the program, and clients going on to join other courses, some in TAFE (linking social capital).

### Two case studies

Two LLN/health partnership programs were chosen for action research, and the data collection phase is due for completion at the end of the year. At this stage only a brief description of the two programs can be provided, including an outline of some of their key features. For both programs, action research training was undertaken with the teacher and other key personnel.

Primarily, the training explained the concept of social capital and discussed the strategies that trainers can use to maximise social capital outcomes for their students. It also explained the action research process following the cycle of planning, implementing, observing and reflecting as explained by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988). The main means of documenting reflections from the participants in both programs was agreed to be taped semi-structured interviews conducted by the researcher at the conclusion of sessions.

### Case study 1

Case study 1 involves an inner Sydney medical centre, established 20 years ago to provide health care for sex workers in the local area. Its client group now includes other 'marginalised' people in the area as well, such as intravenous drug users (IDUs) and youth at risk. Centre personnel include a doctor, nursing and administrative staff, and counsellors, including those involved in outreach work. One of the functions of the centre is to provide a methadone program for clients.

One afternoon every week an Aboriginal 'Health and Healing' group meets at the centre, and it was members from this group that requested a literacy program. Since the beginning of this year an Aboriginal college in Sydney has provided a fortnightly literacy class at the centre.

The number of participants (referred to as clients in the medical centre) attending the literacy class varies from two to six or seven and the class appears to have been accepted ('integrated') as part of the overall services offered by the medical centre. As the teacher describes it, 'whilst they're there they're accessing counselling, doctors, dentists, so it's like a one-stop shop'. Thus, during her class, the doctor can pop in and say (to a client), 'I'm ready for you now'. There are no teaching facilities beyond a room with a central table and chairs. The teacher brings all the resource material she needs to the class each session and she attempts to provide material that is relevant and interesting for the clients.

The interview data have not yet been analysed, but already there are indications of social capital outcomes from the literacy course. There is evidence, for example, of trust developing between all parties but in particular between the teacher and the clients. However, it is also apparent that trust underpins the very operation and success of the medical centre, which in itself has become an important social network for clients. Marginalised people such as inner city sex workers and IDUs are only likely to visit a medical centre where they trust the staff. Thus, in this LLN program it can be difficult to differentiate between the different layers of social capital involving three networks—the medical centre itself, the Aboriginal Health and Healing group, and the literacy class. When an Aboriginal client says, for example, after a period out of town, 'I must get back to (name of the centre), it's my home', (or words to that effect, as described by the teacher), it's not clear precisely to which network she is referring.

For many in this client group, a sense of belonging appears to be influenced largely by their particular life circumstances as marginalised people in this inner city area. For a number of these clients, the medical centre may be one of the few places where they are treated with dignity and respect. For some, even venturing outside of their inner city living location is a cause of anxiety.

**as the teacher describes it,  
'whilst they're there they're  
accessing counselling,  
doctors, dentists, so it's  
like a one-stop shop'**

In the literacy classroom, strong bonding is apparent between some clients as they assist each other with class exercises, and this bonding needs to be seen in the context of the often competitive environment (for example, involving drugs) that some clients may experience outside the medical centre. Some

students are also being encouraged to undertake further courses (and linking social capital) at the Aboriginal college in a neighbouring suburb.

At this stage only a preliminary analysis has been attempted of the pedagogical structures in the classroom which may encourage social capital outcomes. The teacher spoke of accommodating a learning style that involved lots of discussion and cooperation within the group. She also mentioned respect and non-judgemental attitudes, and what she terms 'facilitated' learning in which she sees her role to be largely one of providing the literacy setting and not dictating content. She also mentioned an 'empowerment' philosophy in which her focus isn't on grammatical rules but on individual empowerment, recognition and enabling clients to realise they still have skills despite not using them for many years. The classroom atmosphere is also very relaxed and informal. One client even brings her own dog along to the classroom.

### **Case study 2**

Case study 2 involves a western Sydney Muslim women's association in partnership with a TAFE literacy section and an area health service. For several years a literacy class has been conducted with the United Muslim Women Association (UMWA) as an off-campus TAFE program. Since mid-2007 a separate health program has been conducted at the centre for two hours a week, involving a women's health nurse team teaching with the LLN teacher. Approximately 12 Muslim women attend the course and they were all recruited through the membership network of the UMWA. Some of the women attend both the LLN program and the health program. All the women are from the local and neighbouring suburbs, an area to the west of Sydney in which there are the highest concentrations of Muslims in Australia. Most of the women are married with children and not in paid employment. Their first language is predominantly Arabic.

The women's health nurse and the LLN teacher are both Australian-born and non-Muslim and not surprisingly, the program is conducted in English. The ideas for topics to begin the course emanated from the students in the separate LLN program. The topics the women wanted to discuss in the health program related to healthy eating, exercise and stress relief.

Following the initial topics involving healthy eating and exercise, the teacher said that each week the program had a life of its own. What she meant was that one topic led naturally to another and created an enormous amount of discussion and interaction amongst the women in the class:

... really active interaction, and then you'd have cross, going across people speaking Arabic to explain something that someone didn't understand...people telling stories about

their families, how they dealt with their kids eating, so yes, lots of interaction.

Similar to the medical centre case study above, the women's health nurse explained that her philosophy was for the women to take control: 'it's about empowering them...to be healthy themselves...with that knowledge'.

At this early stage it is apparent there are social capital outcomes from this course, though they have yet to be fully documented and analysed. In particular, the women demonstrated trust with their fellow students and the teachers by discussing issues that were personal—'incredibly personal', according to the health nurse—as the classroom discussions shifted to issues of relationships, domestic violence and divorce. Strong bonding is apparent between women in the classroom group. There is also potential linking social capital from the information shared in the classroom about the public swimming pools and gyms in the local area, which now have women-only sessions.

## Conclusions

The NCVET-funded research project reported in this paper is at the mid-way stage, and action research programs are current in NSW, Queensland and the Northern Territory. When the data are collected and analysed, the challenge will be to link the documented pedagogical practices in each location to the social capital outcomes and from there to develop guidelines for innovative and effective approaches to adult LLN pedagogy.

As the study by Wickert and McGuirk (2005) demonstrated, there are relatively few examples of cross-sectoral programs involving LLN. This paper has outlined some of the key features of existing partnership programs involving LLN and the health sector, and the two action research projects have the potential to provide deeper insights into the pedagogical practices that result in social capital outcomes. This analysis will need to take into account the three course-related networks outlined earlier in this paper (see Figure 1).

Adult LLN courses have long had an affinity with health issues (see Hohn 2002) and there would appear to be considerable scope for adult LLN providers working with health agencies. Currently in Australia, little is documented about how this can be undertaken and the project reported here might make a useful start. Further, it may help to encourage debate and interest from the LLN field in the concept of health literacy that has taken off internationally in recent years. Finally, it may also highlight further the important role of social capital outcomes from LLN-related courses.

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**and his recent research focuses on the social capital outcomes of adult LLN courses.**

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by NCELTR, include real life stories supported by authentic and interesting black and white photographs.

In Policy Update, Liz Davidson leads us through the reaccreditation process of the ESL Framework due to take place in 2008. Our Foreign Correspondence is from Helen Keane, who shares with us her insightful and entertaining thoughts on teaching an NMIT Certificate in English for Business and Global Communication in China.

In Beside the Whiteboard, Dawn Doherty reflects on a teaching career that has ranged across the Secondary, Youth Detention and TAFE sectors and gives her view of the changes to the CGEA.

The Editorial Committee wishes you a happy and safe break. See you in 2008!

Julie Palmer

# An organic association: the VALBEC history project

by Beverley Campbell

**The Victorian Adult Literacy and Basic Education Council—which we all know as VALBEC—celebrates 30 years as a professional association next year. In compiling a history of VALBEC, editor Beverley Campbell's dedication included reading the entire 29-year back-copy collection of *Fine Print*.**

In a recent history of the University of Western Australia Press (Fitzgerald 2005), Professor Fred Alexander is quoted as saying, 'A university is essentially organic in character, the achievements of one generation of its members are linked inseparably with the work of those who preceded, as with those who succeeded it'. Equally this description could apply to VALBEC and its organic nature as a professional organisation. This short article about the VALBEC history project aims to give a glimpse into how the project is taking shape, as it explores some of what has made VALBEC the organic and dynamic association it has become during its 30 years of existence.

In comparison with the longevity of some other professional organisations, VALBEC's 30 years, though still few in number, is a milestone worth celebrating. The current VALBEC committee has commissioned a history to mark this significant milestone, and as the person granted the project to compile the VALBEC history it is now occupying much of my time. Several questions are preoccupying my thinking as I read back copies of *Fine Print* and carry out the necessary research such a project demands: What gives a professional organisation like VALBEC life? What makes it endure beyond the involvement of the current committee? What would be lost if an organisation such as VALBEC ceased to exist?

Two things stand out from all the issues and activities that VALBEC has been involved in over the last 30 years, and which have given the organisation life: the people involved, and the purpose of the organisation. VALBEC would not have survived without the energy and commitment of many people serving terms of office and then stepping aside and handing over the baton to the next generation. It is the creative solutions to changing circumstances that have also helped to keep the organisation alive. As a professional organisation dependent on the support of its membership for continued survival, VALBEC has weathered highs and lows of membership numbers and ongoing questions of purpose and identity. But it is the people's commitment to the common goal of providing adult literacy and basic education, in as many contexts as possible to those who seek it, that gives the organisation its *raison d'être*.

A VALBEC reference group is providing advice on the compiling of the history. A selection of key *Fine Print* articles will be reprinted to illustrate the major pedagogical and policy changes of the last 30 years and to show how these debates have often been in dialogue with each other. In addition, a number of key people who have been involved in VALBEC activities in different ways will be interviewed to provide an accompanying oral history of the organisation.

## It's all in the name

VALBEC's name best reflects its purpose — Victorian adult literacy and basic education council. Other sorts of adult education could be included under this umbrella: lifelong learning, second chance learning, adult basic education, life skills, but Victorian Adult Literacy Council (VALC) was the name of choice when the organisation was first formed in August 1978. At the national level, the Australian Council for Adult Literacy (ACAL) had already been formed some years earlier and there were some in Victoria who believed that the time was right for the formation of a state council. Those initially involved in the formation of the organisation chose this name because it fitted with the wider national movement, itself part of a worldwide movement, to create educational opportunities for those who had not fared well in the school system or who had had limited educational opportunities. This philosophy of giving people voice was part of the radicalisation of minority groups worldwide, and the voices of the adult literacy movement joined the voices of gay rights, women's rights, black rights and other liberation movements.

The first volume of VALBEC's journal, *Fine Print*, was produced in February 1979 as a newsletter to support the burgeoning adult literacy field. The editorial policy aimed at giving a voice to both tutors and students. For several years *Fine Print* production moved from provider to provider, where the writing generated provided copy for the next edition. Cut and paste was the method of production, with Letraset headings. Language experience was the accepted pedagogy of the time and tutors and students were encouraged to write up their learning experiences for publication in *Fine Print*.

In 1987, after lengthy and occasionally heated internal debate the name was changed to the Victorian Adult Literacy and Basic Education Council. Gradually the organisation became known by its acronym, VALBEC, which has endured as a name and continues to be used with affection. Initially though, that name caused some confusion, as is illustrated by a letter written to the organisation when it was housed in Ross House in Flinders Lane. Addressed to Ms Val Bec, it confused the organisation's name with its personnel!

### **History is decided by the editors**

As the VALBEC history takes shape, it is not a conventional chronological recounting of VALBEC's last 30 years of existence. That is not possible, nor would it make for very compelling reading. Nor is it a personality-driven account of the many people involved through the 30 years of VALBEC's life. People are only mentioned in relation to particular activities or events as they are included in the narrative. The history project is still a work in progress and things will change, but at this stage of the project's life the publication has a working shape which includes two main sections. My reading of a full set of back copies of *Fine Print* has guided this division into two sections.

Section I: 'The bootstraps era', gives an overview of the first 15 years of VALBEC's life. It was an organisation on the move from grass roots movement to professional association, as it established its identity as a professional body supporting a burgeoning adult literacy field. This part of the narrative concentrates on those characteristics which mark this era as significantly different from the next 15 years.

Section II: 'Voices and versions of the literacy story', takes a different approach to convey the multi-discursivity of the adult literacy field. In the preceding 15 years, not only had there been a proliferation of the contexts in which adult literacy and basic education was taking place, but an increasing number of competing discourses was making multiple subject positions available. For adult literacy professionals in the field, having to juggle these multiple positions introduced by this multi-discursivity produced a certain amount of struggle and tension. With some commentary, Section II is a thematic exploration of some of the major debates in adult literacy pedagogy and policy in the 1990s with selected articles from *Fine Print*. Since the beginning, VALBEC and *Fine Print* had seen themselves as 'a broad church', and by 1993 it had become even broader. Which versions of the literacy story was VALBEC prepared to accept and *Fine Print* prepared to publish? Although *Fine Print* editorial policy encouraged debate, it did not have an 'anything goes' policy. Decisions about articles were informed by questions of whether it was in 'the best interests' of students and whether it represented 'good practice'.

This publication will not just be a history of the changing nature of VALBEC; it will also bear witness to the many people who dedicated time and energy to VALBEC and its associated activities over the past 30 years, and who also worked to ensure good practice in adult literacy education. However, ultimately it will be a tribute to all those who have made VALBEC the organic and vital organisation it has become.

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# Practical matters

Welcome to Practical Matters Unplugged, where Jane Coker from Community Music Victoria introduces us to a unique singing culture based on Vocal Nosh—which is not the name of a Finnish Folk Group. Also, Karen Manwaring talked to Chris Falk and reports his reflections on the way singing makes language-learning seem easier. And Lyndal Chambers explains how singing creates a feeling of wellbeing in students and teachers.

## Vocal nosh: singing with your supper

by Jane Coker

Six years before the Choir of Hard Knocks on television gave the general public a reason to talk about singing, two rural Victorian women formed a partnership that has grown into a unique singing culture. The extension of the Vocal Nosh model has communities across Victoria singing regularly. In 2000, as a Grapevine Music venture, Fay White and Anne-Marie Holley developed a training package to skill up singing teams across Victoria.

### The two of us

#### Anne-Marie Holley

When I saw Fay White running a Vocal Nosh in Newstead, I witnessed an experienced musician with excellent facilitation skills. The ability to work with a group of people who did not know each other, to include them all and get them to have fun together, particularly appealed to me. As I watched the Vocal Nosh unfold, I recalled many conversations in rural communities. They were the problem-solving conversations about the people, our communities, and us: ‘We need activities that aren’t sport’... ‘we want activities that men and women can do together’.

At Vocal Nosh, not only were they doing it together, they were enjoying their difference in harmony.

‘We are exhausted from the sheer volume of work involved in keeping our community going’. I watched buoyed and bubbly people nattering as they left the Nosh and saw that Fay had provided a way for people to be together with levity and energy. This didn’t drain people.

‘We have no voice. No one listens to us’. The lament of isolation, of being unheard, is a profound and dangerous pain—one I know first-hand. I’ve seen its fruit frequently in rural communities and on farms. At Vocal Nosh, I had a voice and experienced the joy of listening and being heard, singing together. And I didn’t have to think of anything to say. I could just totally be one hundred per cent myself; follow the directions and it would work.

The Vocal Nosh was also touching some of my idiosyncratic passions. I have a passion for democracy, and in community singing we practiced democratic ideals. The public voice of women is fundamental to modern democracy. The more our voices are heard in public, the less vulnerable we are as a group. The more we practice using our voices in public, the less we will be silenced. Singing is a critical way for women’s voices to occupy public space, and that makes all women safer.

I thought of communities who would lap this up. I thought of times when I had sat around the piano with rural women at the local hall after an event. And I remembered that I had thought,

‘Who will play the piano for the next generation? How will they find simple joy like this together?’

It occurred to me that if we could train other people to do what Fay did, then communities around the state could sing. I think that the two things that make this project innovative are the model itself, which was Fay’s work, and the development of an arts project that built cultural infrastructure—people with particular skills, an approach to practice that isn’t based in place but in the communities.

Our project design contained many of my learnings as a rural woman. Other rural women’s words reverberated in me and fuelled my arguments and my thoughts in the project design. One example was singing teams.

‘Nothing ever happens in a country town with just one person doing it. You have to have a group of people’. These words are recalled as one of Dorothy Dunn’s edicts, no doubt issued outside the building while we were both having a smoke in the break, at a meeting in the mid-90s. I’ve stopped smoking, but have used the wisdom of Victoria’s rural women often. The Surf Coast singing team is living proof of Dorothy’s wisdom. I’m sure you’ll see many other women’s wisdoms in the project—a network of singing leaders!

Ummm...is that new? Thanks, Rural Women’s Network!

### Fay White

I first met Anne-Marie Holley when she came to sing at Vocal Nosh in Newstead. This monthly singing session around a shared meal had been going about 18 months and had grown from an enthusiastic group of about 15 to a regular 35 or 40 singers who came from the surrounding district. The development of the idea had been gradual for me, starting in childhood really.

I’d been lucky to grow up in a singing family and a singing community. I didn’t realise until later that not everybody sang. I thought it was a natural thing you did at any time, every day. In the 60s I played guitar and sang at every opportunity, but when I realised nobody was going to discover me, and I wasn’t going to be Australia’s answer to Joan Baez, I decided I had to make opportunities to ‘just sing anyway’.

# Practical matters

I started to organise house concerts with help from friends who had good-sized lounge-rooms. I'd read about people who were doing it and I thought, 'We can do that, we know about hospitality'. We'd get together 20 or 30 people in a house and I'd sing and people would join in. We'd usually follow the concert with happy chatting over a slap-up supper.

Then invitations came to lead singing workshops at festivals and music camps. I had trained as a teacher and loved teaching. I was also influenced by the singing practice of Frankie Armstrong, to whom I'd been introduced by The Boite. I started organising singing workshops and included lunch because I loved doing it. It slowly dawned on me that the combination of singing and food was a deeply satisfying, time-honoured human activity. Lots of people know this of course; it's not unique to me.

When I moved back up here the people in Newstead said, 'We want to sing regularly', so I organised regular group singing with food and called it Vocal Nosh. People seemed to enjoy a 'free and fearless space' where they could make satisfying harmony quite quickly without the anxiety of performance or failure. It was the slow-growing fruit of many years, rather than a sudden flash of an idea.

Anne Marie could see and describe what I was doing as a singing facilitator and articulate its value to a community. She understood how shared leadership was more sustainable than being a lone ranger. Without her insight, Vocal Nosh would probably have gone no further than Newstead and I'd have probably burned out by now. The conjunction of both of our visions and skills was a very lucky one.

We were fortunate also at that time to be able to make connections with VicHealth and the National Rural Health Alliance. VicHealth

asked, 'What can you do with music?' and we thought that providing musical and community-minded people from communities across the state to gain some important modern skills, and to let them learn from each other was the best thing we could provide. There is no surplus cultural capital in rural communities. It is almost impossible for people to experiment and fail and to develop confidence in something new quickly. We developed a proposal that VicHealth accepted, and Anne Marie and I started training community singing leaders and providing ongoing encouragement and support. After two years' training about 60 leaders we teamed up with Community Music Victoria and the Victoria Sings project was born.

Five years later, the project continues to grow and has attracted the interest of the Department of Victorian Communities and ArtsVictoria, as well as VicHealth. There are catalysts in four rural regions across the state, training and supporting singing leaders and helping the community at large understand, enjoy and promote the benefits of singing together.

Although there has been a revival of community singing across the western world, only Victoria has a systematic approach that enables all segments of the community, and most particularly people in rural communities, to have access.

For information about how to get involved in a singing group near you or about training opportunities for people who would like to get singing groups happening, contact Community Music Victoria on 03 9662 1162 or by email: [cmv@netspace.net.au](mailto:cmv@netspace.net.au). You can read more about Victoria Sings on <http://cmv.customer.netspace.net.au>.

**Jane Coker works at Community Music Victoria.**

## Contagious happiness: a workshop on Songs and Meaning

by *Karen Manwaring*

It's official—singing is good for you! It boosts your immune system and gives your heart and lungs a workout. A natural by-product of group singing is heightened self-esteem and growth in personal and group confidence. Subtly but powerfully, bonds form between people, and individuals become a community. Group singing is fun.

Chris Falk, who ran the Songs and Meaning workshop at this year's VALBEC conference, is a passionate advocate of Community Music Victoria's (CMV) Victoria Sings project. Chris maintains that: 'everyone's born to sing—it's everyone's birthright. It's only when we're singing that we use our entire voice mechanism'.

Chris teaches singing and song writing in a range of community and private settings, and is also a teacher of the Alexander Technique, which builds awareness of how we use our bodies, releasing tension

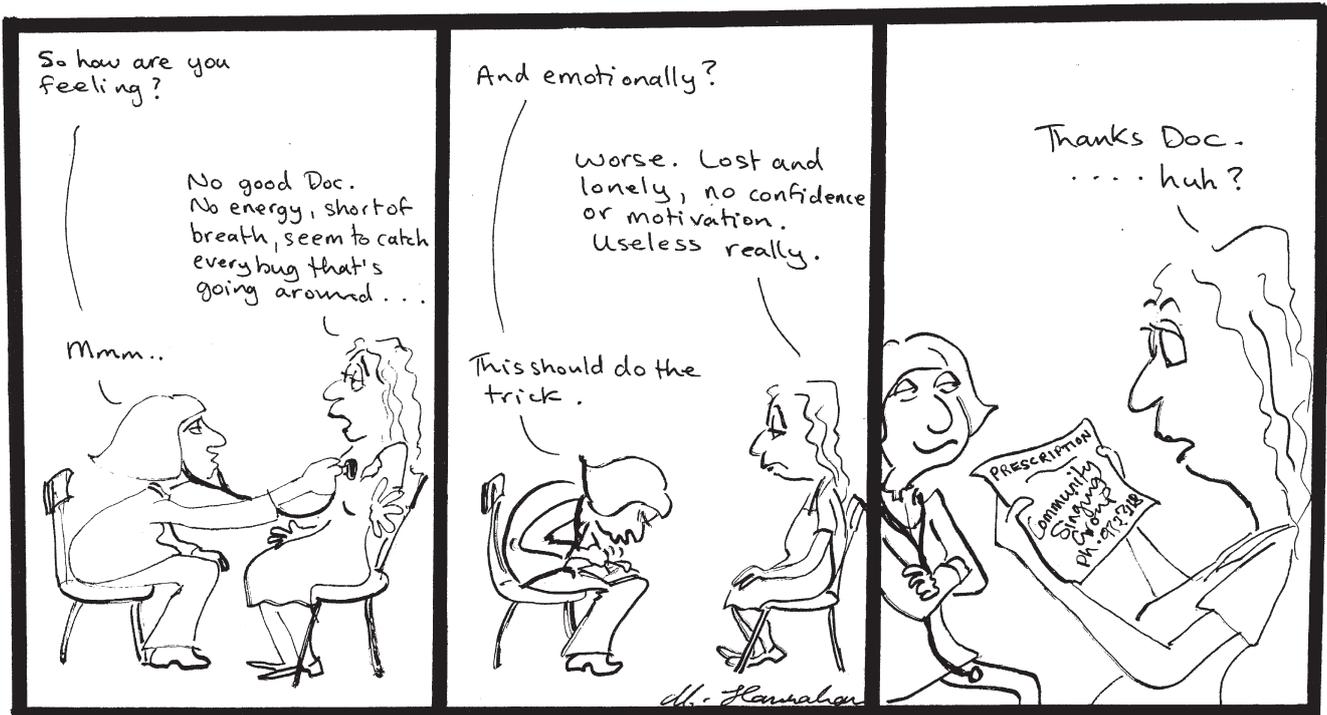
through ease of posture. Community singing brings together Chris' passions: music, health and community:

It never ceases to amaze me that, as long as the atmosphere is non-judgemental and inclusive, people will do things like walk out of the classroom singing together, or record their favourite song from the session on their mobile phone so they don't forget it.

Chris facilitates singing and song writing groups in her work with ALBE and ESL students at NMIT in Melbourne. At her VALBEC conference workshop she talked about the fact that singing sessions make both students and teachers happier:

I noticed in the classes that the students were always energised after we sang. Focus on their work improved and there was much jolliness!

# Practical matters



When using songs as a teaching tool for language and literacy, Chris suggests that teachers present the songs and words to students aurally at first. In this way people get to hear and practice the rhythm and pronunciation of the words without having to stumble over the reading first. Once the students are a bit familiar with the words and the tune, the teacher can introduce the written words.

Language is inherently musical in its rhythm and, intonation, stress and pronunciation. Learning a language through song seems naturally easier. Chris reflects:

I've had several conversations with people about how they or their parents had used songs (usually pop songs from the radio) to teach themselves English when they first came to live in Australia. One woman I know would tape the songs and then try to work out the words. She would write them to the best of her ability, and then ask people if they were right—very resourceful!

Chris is a great advocate for using simple, well-known songs in class. In the Songs and Meaning workshop she used 'Row, Row, Row Your Boat...' with the group as a way of encouraging teachers to use simple songs. Chris used this song as a round:

Row, row, row, your boat gently down the stream  
Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily, life is but a dream

Rounds are very useful, being simple and complex at the same time. Chris then did a 'call and response' song, which she often uses when first learning a song:

Morning comes (morning comes) Low tide (low tide). (Repeat these two lines three times.)

Let's wade out to the reef (let's wade out to the reef)  
Gather them seafish, gather them shells  
Let's wade out to the reef.  
Gather them seafish, gather them shells  
Let's wade out to the reef (repeat one).

(Written by Greg Champian)

Chris then introduced a 'silly' song 'because laughing is always good. But some people don't like silly songs, they seem to annoy them!'

What a weird bird (clap) the frog is  
When it sits it nearly walks  
When it walks it nearly runs  
When it runs it nearly flies  
Ain't got the time to talk about hardly (then back to the top)  
(Written by Peter Butler)

A beautiful song that is appropriate for many occasions:

We are one world one voice one heart beating (repeat)  
Everybody's living in this world, everybody's got a voice let's use it  
Everybody's living in this world, one heart beating  
We are one.

(Written by Sue Kirkpatrick)

At the end of the workshop, Chris led a song that everyone had sung at the opening of the conference. It shows us very clearly

# Practical matters

the power of living literacies as the drought and the blazes of last summer were still so strong in our thoughts:

It's dry so dry, smoke and fires are everywhere  
We long with the earth for the sweet touch of rain  
(Written by Ann Bermingham)

Chris points out that there are many places to find songs:

- Pop songs
- Songs you sang as a child
- Just the chorus of a song
- Songs you sang as a teenager
- Community Music Victoria's Victoria Sings Songbook, from Community Music Victoria, [cmv@netspace.net.au](mailto:cmv@netspace.net.au); <http://cmv.customer.netspace.net.au>; tel: (03) 9662 1162.

Community Music Victoria has many training workshops and song swaps open to all.

Chris also told the workshop group that those involved with Community Music Victoria have an unwritten policy that it's fine to ring and ask a CMV member to sing a song onto your answer machine if you can't quite remember how it goes. That still stands.

## Write a song

Some ideas:

- Use the melody of an existing song and make up a new verse and or chorus.
- Play around with a few to make your melody and then add words.
- Make a story with rhyme and add a tune.

## The lead singer...with teachers of ESL

by Lyndal Chambers

Imagine leaving your homeland forever. You arrive in a new country, and everything is different: the food, the clothes, the customs, and the language. There are so many obstacles to overcome, so many things to organise, such as housing and a job, and you desperately need to improve your grasp of the local language.

Luckily, there is a language class you can get to at the Neighbourhood Learning Centre. You arrive anticipating alienation and hours of intense concentration. What a relief when you discover lots of people like you from different parts of the world singing together!

One of my ongoing projects with Community Music Victoria has been working with teachers of English as a Second Language (ESL). It has been a fantastic process of sharing our knowledge and

These are some suggestions for the classroom, and Chris knows teachers and singing group leaders who have made great songs that became very important in telling people's stories, both individually and as a group. Chris emphasises the importance of this for individual and group confidence and identity.

On the day of the workshop, Chris got people to individually write some of the thoughts they'd had so far during the conference about the Living Literacies theme. Participants then shared their thoughts with the person next to them. Chris got them to think about what lines they thought were good for a song and, as they called them out, Chris wrote them on the whiteboard. The words worked well and were sung at the closing of the conference:

Everyone's got a story to tell  
Hope stretches limits of what's possible  
Thinking in new ways 'bout problems of old  
Open the gates and let ideas come in.  
By telling my story I find my place  
Writing and talking and texting and song  
Trusting relationships helps us to grow  
The lives we are changing are also our own.

Chris added:

'We were very pleased with ourselves. It all came together very easily and was a great expression of the moment together. Our story-song was written by very expressive, educated people. I have heard of some wonderful simple songs since then. One about "I hope it's lunchtime soon 'cos I'm hungry", and another about "You're excellent"!'

experiences. There are so many reasons why singing is a useful tool in learning a language. Through singing, we learn the rhythms and accents of words, putting the emphasis in the right place. The vocabulary and the order of the words stick in our memory so much more easily; there is lots of repetition, different pathways in the brain are used to process, store and retrieve musical information, and above all, it's fun and engaging. Singing is a social activity that gives us a feeling of wellbeing. It can reach an emotional and spiritual place within us.

Through a series of workshops with ESL teachers, I have learnt a lot about the various types of problem encountered by students and teachers of ESL. Together we have adapted simple songs to make them more relevant to specific ESL classes, changing things to suit adults or children, beginners, or advanced speakers of

**Continued on page 28 ...**

# Technology Matters

PowerPoint, along with MS Word, and perhaps Photoshop...but then there's Illustrator and Freehand...but back to PowerPoint, and in Debbie Soccio's second tutorial you will see why it is regarded as one of the industry standard programs.

## Using MS PowerPoint–Part 2

In the winter edition of *Fine Print* we focused on the following to get you started using PowerPoint:

- Create a new slide and choose a template
- Adding text to a slide
- Inserting images, video and sound into a slide.

So, how did you go? In this edition, we are focusing on giving your basic PowerPoint presentation a bit more pizzazz. We will focus on the following:

- Animating text
- Creating transitions between slides
- Using buttons in a slideshow
- Viewing the slideshow

Work through each section and practice inserting different actions. Play with the buttons, see what they can do, work out which effects, transitions and buttons you like best. Remember, you can't break the program! If you make a mistake, click Control Z to undo.

And don't forget...always remember, to save your work every 5–10 minutes.

### Animating text

Animating text means that each bulleted point of your slide or each picture appears on the screen one at a time. For example see figure 1.

### How to animate items on a slide

Choose the format of the new slide. Try to stick the rule of thumb: Avoid more than six lines of text, or six words per line. Change to slide sorter view.

Select the slide you wish to animate. From the Slide Show menu, select Custom animation. See figure 2.

There is a range of different animation types that you can choose from. There are four categories of animation for you to choose from: Entrance, Emphasis, Exit and Motion Paths. Each type of animation will display four or five options, but if you click the More Effects button, you will see many more options. Try out the different types of animation to see which ones you like the best. See figure 3.

Once you select an effect, it will show you what the animation looks like. In addition, you will see that you have the choice

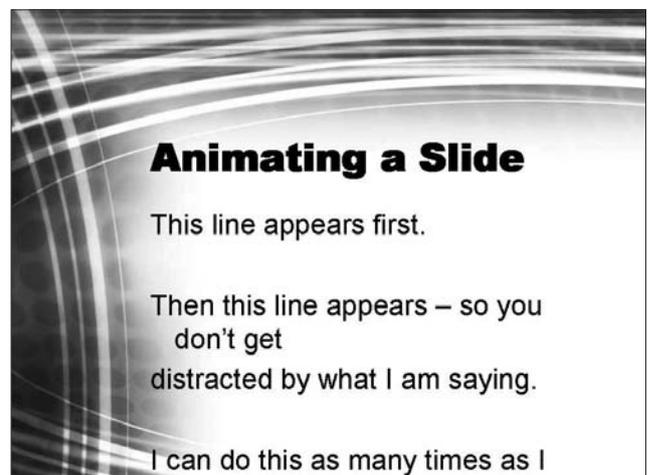
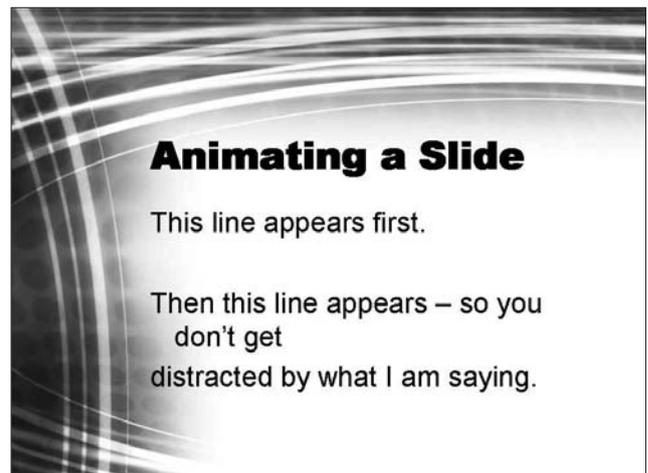
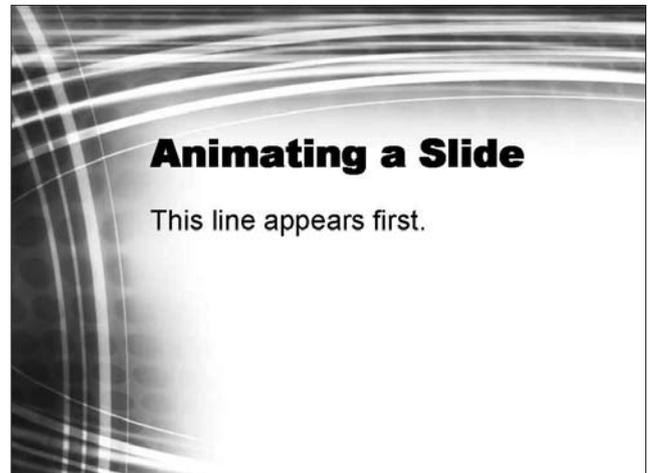
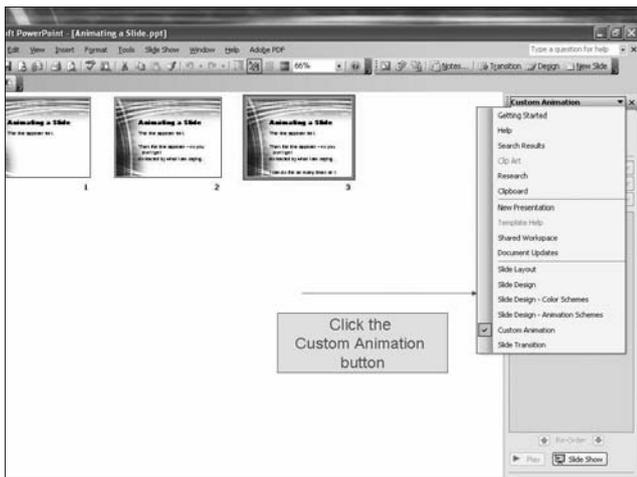


Figure 1



**Figure 2**

to have the animation play on the mouse click before or after the current slide, and also the choice to speed up or slow down the animation for each slide. To see what the animation looks like, click on the Slide Show button to see this effect in action in your slide presentation.

Remember, the purpose of a PowerPoint slide show is to communicate information, not to show off your animation skills.

### Making changes to the animation effect

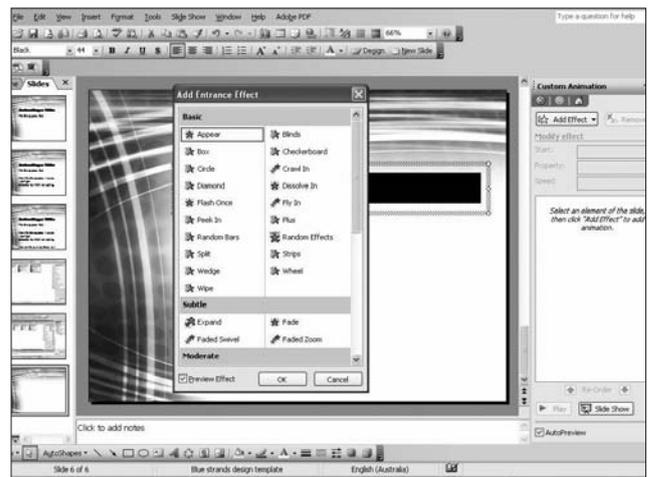
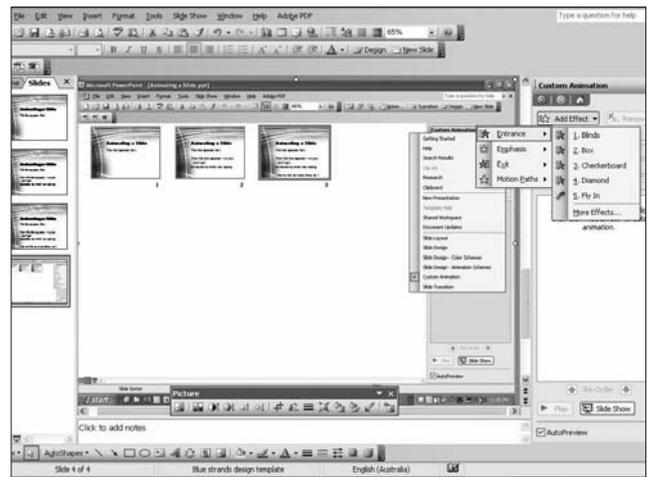
After selecting an animation effect, a new icon is added to the Custom Animation pane. The icon includes a mouse, green star, and the item animated: text, chart, or image. At the right end of this icon you will see a downward-pointing triangle. Click on the triangle to display the menu of possible changes you can make to the animation effect. See figure 4.

- Animation and sound: Click on the name of the effect and you will see the list of effects available. Click on the sound and you will see the list of sounds available. If you do select on a sound, it will play as each element appears. The sounds can sound good at first, but if you are trying to talk at the same time, they can become annoying and repetitive.
- After animation: Dimming means changing the colour of the previous points so the new point presented will stand out. You may also choose to hide the previous points so that only your new point is displayed.

### Introducing text

You may introduce the text in one of three ways:

- All at once: This shows the entire line of text, all at once. For most presentations, this would be the preferred setting.
- By word: Each word that you typed shows up one at a time. This could be used where there are fewer words in your presentation, but it can be annoying and very hard for the audience to read, especially if the accompanying sound is audible.
- By letter: Well, you can use this—but WHY?



**Figure 3**

Before you leave the Custom Animation window, click on the Preview button to see, and hear, what your effect will look and sound like.

### Creating transitions between slides

A transition is the effect that is used as a slide comes onto the screen. To include transitions, first create your slide show and then go to the Slide Sorter View. (This can be found in the bottom left corner of the PowerPoint window).

At the top of the window you will find a transitions button on the Slide Sorter toolbar.

Selecting the Transitions button will open a Transitions pane on the right side of the window. A preview of the transition that you choose for a specific slide will take place on the slide sorter view. See figure 5.

Options available:

- Type of transition: To see the full list, you will need to scroll down. A good way to see what they look like is to have a play and see what they look like.
- Speed of transition: Sometimes you will want your slide

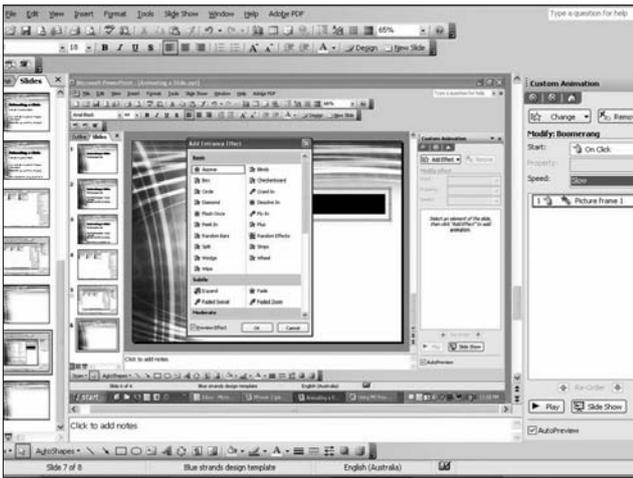


Figure 4

to change quickly. Sometimes, slow is better. Experiment to see which speed looks best for your show.

- Sound to accompany transition: Although this is probably one of those redundant tools that you wouldn't want to use too often.
- Slide advance: This will allow you to automatically set the number of seconds you want a slide to be displayed before changing to the next slide. It is advisable to use this feature only if your show will be displayed on a kiosk, or as a display.
- Apply to all slides: Do you use the same transition throughout the whole presentation or do you provide variety? Using the same slide can provide consistency, but it can also provide a sense of boredom and sameness as well. You decide.
- Play: Selecting this button gives you one more look at the transition style.

Always test your presentation before showing it. What sounded like such a good choice while you were writing may not work out as well as you thought.

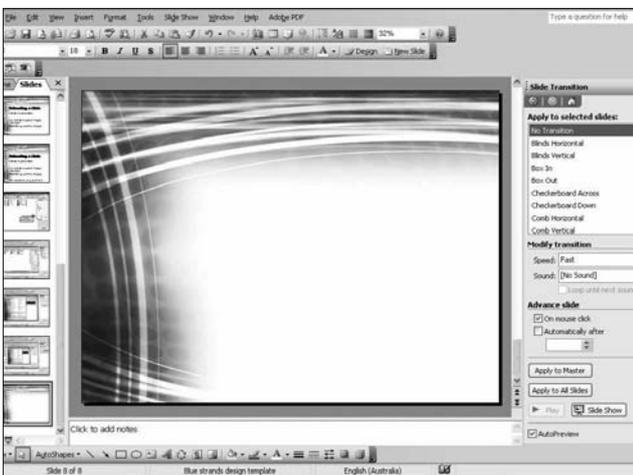


Figure 5

## Using buttons on a slide show

After selecting an action button, your mouse cursor turns into a cross hair shape. Move the cursor to wherever you want your action button to be placed (this is often in the bottom corner of the slide). Press Click, keep the mouse button depressed, drag the mouse outwards and to the right to draw a button.

As soon as you finish drawing the button, let go of the mouse button. An Action Settings pop-up window will be displayed. If you have selected the Forward or Next button, the default setting will be to go to the next slide by mouse click. Click OK to accept this setting. From the settings window below (shortened for this image) you could select Mouse Over, or click on the down arrow in the Next Slide box and choose another action. For this show, select the default setting. See figure 6.

Select the next slide. Repeat the procedure to create a button to the next slide. Make this button act also on a mouse click, just like the first one you made. Also, create a button in the bottom left corner of slide Two to go back to the first slide. You will need to add a back button as well if you want to be able to move forward and backwards using Action Buttons. Read the pop-up window carefully. Even though you have chosen the Back button, you must select Previous Slide from the pull down menu.

Don't forget. Your buttons won't work unless you are in the Slide Show view.

## Other possibilities

Select the next slide in your presentation. Put the same two buttons at the bottom of the slide. After you have completed those buttons, add a third button in the middle at the top of the slide. This will be a hyperlink to an internet page. From the pull down menu in the Hyperlink to: box, select URL. A Hyperlink to URL dialog box pops up. Paste, or type a URL into the box. I have suggested one for you: <http://www.google>.

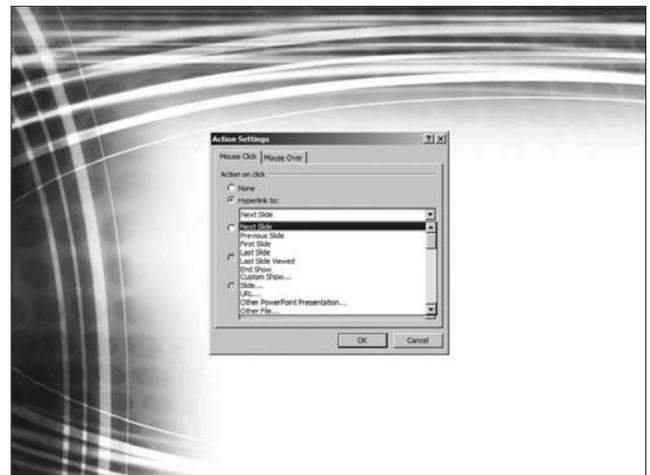


Figure 6

com.au. Copy this URL to paste into the Hyperlink to URL dialog box. Click OK.

On your final slide, you might want to add a back button and a Home Button, which will take you back to the first slide. Choose the button with a house on it, as a link to the Home slide. Make this a Mouse Over button, so clicking is not required.

You are in no way limited to just the twelve Action Buttons that are available in PowerPoint. You can use any shape, clip art, photograph, etc as an action button by just right-clicking on it and selecting the action settings option. Select any AutoShape from the menu, or select Freeform from the lines section and draw any shape button you wish to use.

## Viewing your slide show

Your slides have been created. Transitions and animations have been selected. It is time to work on your entire show. Go to the Slide Sorter view so you can get a visual overview.

If you decide that a slide belongs in another place, you may click and drag the entire slide to the new spot. Simply click on the slide you want to move and drag it to the place you want it to be moved to.

There are a number of ways that you can view your Slide Show. Each of these will start your Slide Show from slide 1.

Click on the Slide Show button at the bottom of the window [  ].

Go to either the View menu or the Slide Show menu at the top of the screen and select Slide Show.

Press the F5 button and your Slide Show will also start.

If you are working on a slide and want to test your show starting from any slide other than slide 1, use the Slide Show button at the bottom of the window.

There is an option that gives you more control. Go to the Slide Show menu, and select Set Up Show or Rehearse Timings.

Sometimes you might want a number of slides to choose continuously, without having to click the mouse key. Do this you will need to go to the Tool Bar at the top of the screen, click Slide Show and then click Set Up Show.

This choice allows control over several parameters. See figure 7.

The principal use of this window will be to cause the show to loop continuously until you hit the Esc key. Even though timings are specified, you could choose to advance slides manually. Pen



Figure 7

colour will allow you to write on the slide during the show, and the mark will not permanently change the slide.

Rehearse timings: If you select this option, your show immediately starts. A timer begins to run in the bottom right corner. When you are ready for the next thing to happen, click once with your mouse. Nothing will happen until you click. Wait until the exact amount of time has elapsed before you click. PowerPoint records all of those timings and will ask you at the end of the rehearsal if you want to save those times. If you say yes then any times you may have entered will be changed when you go back to the Slide Sorter view

## Slide show shortcuts

Viewing the slide show: You may begin a show by pressing the F5 button. Once the show is running you can use the arrow keys to go forward (right arrow) or backward (left arrow) in your slide show.

Hiding the slide show: If there is an interruption in your show (an announcement from the office, or an unruly student, for example) you can black out the screen by pressing the B key. To bring your show back, press the B key again. You may turn the screen white or bring your show back, by pressing the W key.

## Drawing on your slide

You can use the pen to draw on your slide. You can draw a line around a word or object. To exchange your arrow cursor for the pen, hold down the Ctrl key and press the P key. (Note: this only works when your slide show is running). See figure 8.

After using the Ctrl P combination your arrow cursor will be replaced with either a pen or a dot. Click and drag with either to draw on the slide.

Erasing what was drawn: Easy! Just press the E key. Beware though, the E key replaces all the lines drawn on the slide.

Caution: this is an all or nothing step. The E key does not erase back to the last click—it erases all lines drawn on the slide.

Getting out of your slide show: To leave your slide show from any slide, press the Esc key. You do not have to click your way all the way to the end of a show to get out of the slide show.

## Conclusion

There are so many more things that you can do with PowerPoint. If you want more ideas, have a quick look through the Help menu. You will find topics like:

- How to recolour your Clipart Objects
- How to make your objects move
- How to add comments to your PowerPoint slides.

Hopefully, I have shown you some of the bells and whistles to make your next PowerPoint slide show a bit more interactive. Remember, don't overfill your slide show. Keep it succinct! Keep it brief! Keep it engaging and interactive!

Debbie Soccio has worked in the adult literacy field for 16 years and has a particular interest in developing blended learning programs for students who choose to study flexibly.

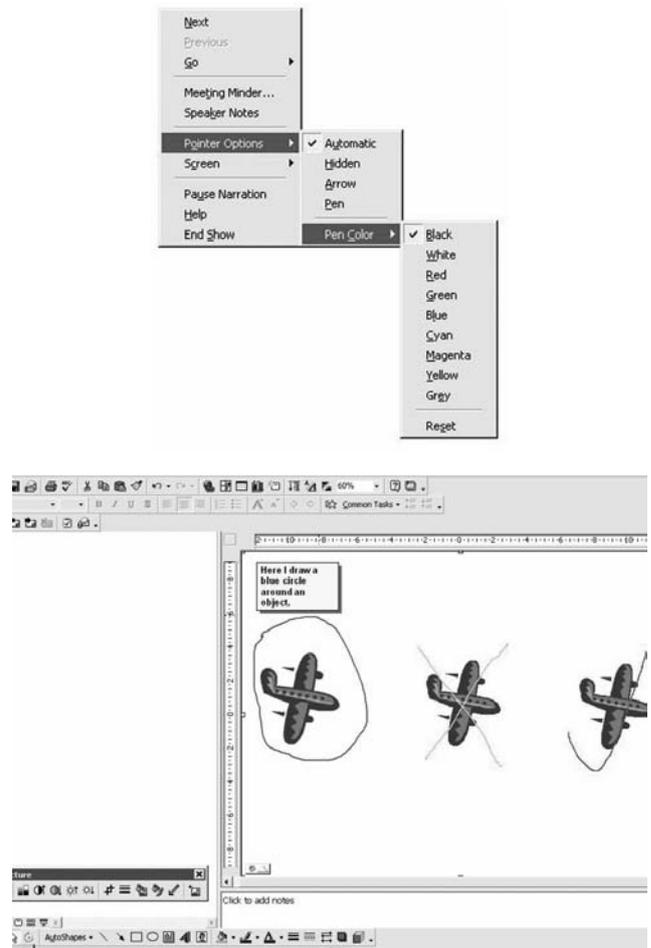


Figure 8

... continued from page 6

gains than others who had not been offered this support, but that they felt more comfortable and supported in the class. Despite the somewhat disappointing outcome of this pilot project, the need to continue to explore new ways of teaching and supporting learners with low levels of literacy in their first language, or who are from a non-literate culture, is critical if we are to be able to adequately assist these people to gain the skills they need for full participation and employment. Revisiting what we know about orality and literacy and what this means for classroom practice would appear to be a good starting point.

This international conference demonstrated that Australia, New Zealand and the US and Canada face similar challenges in addressing the needs of disengaged youth, workplace literacy, second language literacy and indigenous literacy, and have developed some convergent approaches based on common underpinning theories and understandings of the issues and barriers to achieving literacy gains. 'The power of and' International Adult Literacy Conference was a clear reminder

that we are more alike than we are different, and have much to learn and share with each other.

Corinna Ridley has worked in ESL and literacy in Australia for more than 15 years, in curriculum and resource development and professional development as well as teaching. She is now a senior educator at Victoria University, and was sponsored jointly by the University and VALBEC to attend the International Adult Literacy Conference in Auckland, New Zealand.

## Endnotes

- 1 For more information on the 1996 Aspects of Literacy survey see <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/ProductsbyTopic/887AE32D628DC922CA2568A900139365?OpenDocument>
- 2 For further discussion on the difference between orality and literacy see *Orality and Literacy : The Technologizing of the Word*, by Walter J. Ong, 2002

# Open Forum

We welcome your responses to the articles featured in Fine Print. See the back cover for contact details.

In this edited text of her address to the national conference of Women in Adult and Vocational Education (WAVE) in Sydney last May, Helen Macrae says TAFE's funding and leadership problems are as challenging now as they were when WAVE was formed in the mid-1980s. Meanwhile, at the Glenroy Neighbourhood Learning Centre in Melbourne, Jacinta Agostinelli reports on a relatively smooth transition to the new CGEA.

## Then and now: issues for women in TAFE

**T**hank you very much for this opportunity to speak to you. I feel a fraud because I don't work full-time in vocational education and training any more. I've been the chair of a small RTO for the past few years, but I'm not close to the action. However, I have seen the impact of VET audits that drill ever deeper and ever more absurdly into the tiny details of our accredited training.

I have two women friends who currently teach TAFE teachers: one in a rural TAFE, one in a city TAFE. They're both gifted teachers. They both have a lot to do with the Diploma of VET Practice. That's a new, 575-hour, Victorian qualification for TAFE teachers.

I asked Chris and Louise (not their real names) what they think the big gender issues are in TAFE these days. Straight away Louise said:

Sessional and contract staff. They don't have security of employment. This especially affects women. Contracts can be six months or 12, part-time or full-time. Often they won't know until December, maybe January, if they have work the next year. Conscientious sessional and contract staff are exploited. The reporting requirements are quite onerous.

Are the reports useful? I asked her.

Well. I personally don't think so. If sessional staff arc up or challenge they don't get work. They're told, 'we don't do things that way', and they get known as trouble makers.

Chris had this to say about sessional staff:

Yes, even some full time staff say they are isolated. They can feel isolated in their departments and cut off from wider networks. Sessionals are so much more isolated. There's little professional development for them. Coming to take their classes and leaving as soon as they are over, they don't feel and aren't part of a community of practice. They have to be so self-sufficient. This employment system rewards the self-directed. It works against a collective culture. Sessionals, making their own way alone, separate from the rest of the organisation, often don't

feel legitimate. They don't feel like they have any rights. They feel apologetic if they tie up the photocopier. I've always said flexibility is all in the employer's interests.

That said, this particular TAFE is committed to professional development that strengthens the educational culture of organisation as well as the educational repertoire of individuals. I'm told this is unusual these days when so much emphasis is on 'the business of TAFE'.

She went on to say:

Training packages continue to be problematic. Take training packages for many of the trades. The ITB or a private business often makes a workbook based on the package. The learners work through the booklet and trainers supervise this process. The trainers say, 'if learners get stuck we help them' but I'm keen to point out that they, as teachers, do far more than that. They fill in all the vital elements left out of the training packages, with sensitivity to learners' histories and struggles.

After all, education is largely an oral culture. In TAFE the conversation of teachers continues to be central, but this lubrication around learning done by teachers is largely invisible and ignored by officialdom. TAFE teachers talk learners around the work and through it. They tell the story. They give the context. They explain to small groups. They use informal conversation to communicate their wealth of experience and wisdom. Is the training package doing this work? No way. Is the teacher's role properly perceived and acknowledged? No way. TAFE teachers are doing such great work but it goes largely unrecognised and unvalued beyond the immediate site of learning.

I checked this back with Louise. She said:

We're trying to get the teachers to stop being slavishly bound by the workbooks.

That's very succinct. But is the educational methodology of training packages a women's issue per se? If TAFE decision-making is fundamentally a male domain, then it might be.

About ten years ago, soon after the Howard Government was elected, I was in the office of the public service head of our vocational and adult education sector, who told me that the entire suite of training packages were about to be rewritten. Why? Well, most of them were so heavy, shelves all over the country sagged under their weight. And most were so long, so dull and so patronising, hardly anyone could bear to read them, which is a big reason why they stayed on the shelves. As a casual and rather world-weary aside the public service head said they would cost around \$60 million to rewrite which meant that a \$60 million mistake was about to be chucked into the recycling bins of the nation.

As it happens, I'd nagged that public servant over the years about what was wrong with TAFE. I and others had said ad infinitum that until TAFE put its money into training its teachers, until it could trust and respect their integrity, skills, judgement and experience, it would go on sending good money after bad. This public servant seemed to agree but would never go out and argue the case because it could never be won against the combined decision-making power of business, unions, public servants, politicians and TAFE directors.

Let's go back another 20 years. In the 1970s a lot of full-time TAFE teachers could manage their teaching loads by turning up three days a week. A lot of them ran small businesses on the side. Quite a few gave tickets to tradies who were good with their hands but could barely read or write. Those in authority—public servants and politicians and what have you—were pretty unhappy about this, and rightly so. How to fix it?

Do you know the story of the torture of Prometheus? Prometheus went in for trickery and theft. A bit like those TAFE teachers of the 1970s you might say—the ones who went in for low-grade corruption. Zeus ordered that Prometheus be seized and bound to the top of a mountain by unbreakable chains. Each night an eagle with outstretched wings fed on his immortal liver. As much of the liver as the winged monster ate each night grew again the next day ready to be devoured the next night. By the way, the stories say he was released—after 30 years or 30,000 years, depending on the source.

That's the picture I have of TAFE teachers today, chained up by a bureaucratic approach to competency-based training, the heart of their teaching ripped out every day by the proliferating:

Paperwork. Paperwork. Paperwork. Documentation. Enrolment processes. Forms. Records. Evidence-gathering. An accounting mentality (to quote Chris and Louise again).

Has anyone here seen *The lives of others*, a terrific German film? Has anyone read *Stasiland*? If so you'll know what I mean when I say TAFE in Australia is the kind of system that the bureaucrats of East Germany, the GDR, would have been proud to call their own. Thirty years of that is enough. Surely?

In a nutshell, we started WAVE in the mid-1980s because girls and women were under-represented in TAFE as teachers and learners. They were over-represented in sessional employment. They were under-represented in institutional power structures. The work that TAFE trained Australians for was rigidly gender segregated. The best pay went to men. We wanted to support women who worked in TAFE and we wanted to agitate for change.

## So what's changed?

This is Chris's take on current gender issues in TAFE:

How many girls get apprenticeships? Has that changed?

Girls are still very, very rare in the traditionally male-dominated trades. The men teachers say they would like to have more girls but so often when the girls come these men have little experience of girls as apprentices or trainees. The girls come into a blokey TAFE world. Not a macho world. Blokey. That's more complex. It has its own kind of camaraderie and sometimes a form of mateship that includes humour—sexist jokes, for example—and potentially offensive language; some types of swearing, for example. For some young women, this culture is uncomfortable, especially if they are in the minority. It's not individual men, in my experience; they are more than generous. It's an established culture which, as with all cultures, is "natural" for those used to it.

More women seem to be on contracts and are sessional. And how many get teaching fellowships and other advantages available to permanent staff? There seems little consciousness of gender inequality; it isn't even named as an issue. Indeed there's a silence in society generally about this inequality. Hardly surprising then to find it in TAFE.

From what I've seen, TAFE and the trades it trains for are still highly gender-segregated. Women teachers (mostly) have (mostly) women students in hairdressing, beauty therapy, community studies, fashion, retail. Men teachers (mostly) have (mostly) men students in woodwork, plumbing, electrical, safety and construction. The crossovers are in areas like multimedia and hospitality and business studies and horticulture.

All that said, I feel that women in TAFE have more discursive power at a personal level. In contrast, men in TAFE have more institutional power.

That last statement about the discursive power of women is well worth studying. It suggests to me that women in WAVE, indeed all women in TAFE, have a continuing role and responsibility to articulate what's gone wrong—and right—and to widen their critique beyond women's issues per se.

I want to finish by summing up three big things I think are wrong with TAFE at the moment. They were wrong 30 years ago, and as far as I can tell they're still wrong today.

1. TAFE teachers don't get the trust or respect they deserve. They have a weak voice in fundamental educational decisions about curriculum and methodology.

2. By and large TAFE is badly led. The same types who are utterly ignorant about TAFE teaching, who've thrown millions, possibly even billions by now, of taxpayer dollars down the drain on useless curriculum documents, who've slavishly fallen into line with competitive practices, and who've got too few skills of cooperation, are still making too many of the key education decisions about TAFE. Far too many of them—not all of course, because there are some wise and ethical leaders in TAFE—are thought of negatively by those they lead. I speak here of public servants and TAFE directors I know and have known.

3. TAFE is starved of funds. We have strong employment in Australia at the moment. Howard says this is the result of his Work Choices. Others beg to differ. They say it's the resources boom. Here's a quote from last week's *crikey.com* that attracted my attention:

Am I wrong in believing many of the "new jobs" supposedly being created by "Work(non)Choices" are being filled by workers from overseas? Where is the training for Australian workers? Why is so little money and effort being spent on building skills for Australia's future? If this coalition government was so concerned for Australia, why are they leaving workers here out of the loop in this often called "boom time"?

## First impressions of the new CGEA

It is general knowledge in this neck of the woods that Glenroy Neighbourhood Learning Centre started implementing the General Education for Adults Framework in Semester 2. Teachers have been pretty interested in how we are progressing. Writing this report for Open Forum has also given me a chance to evaluate and reflect on our progress.

The transition has been quite smooth in that we moved students across from the level they were working at on the old CGEA. We will need to look at RPL for some students, but with those students who are ahead in hours, most have welcomed the extra study time. As this is a new certificate it is possible for students to repeat some learning outcomes where desired. Also, the nominal hours fit nicely into our timetable with just a little bit to spare, and integrating levels has been possible.

The new document is teacher-friendly in that it gives translations of words such as range of texts, features, sources, predicted and range of strategies. When planning what to teach and then assess, this guide has been very useful.

Now for the hard parts. The most difficult aspect of the new framework has been gathering the necessary evidence of work from students. For assessment to be fair we need to show that three different text types have been accessed on at least three different occasions. How much of this evidence do we need to file to be AQTF-compliant? Plus, there needs to be a period of time between each occasion that texts are accessed. In a normal adult literacy class, attendance is an issue due to students moving in and out of work, family commitments and health problems. Patchy attendance of some students makes this requirement of the new certificate difficult to implement. As no record keeping tools have

been developed, record keeping has also been an issue. It's possible, but it is very messy. We are working on ways of record keeping but time has been precious and we don't want to recreate the wheel. Is a standard record keeping system being developed?

We have already conducted an internal moderation session. One obscurity was knowing how much evidence we needed to moderate. For example, with the unit Engage with Texts for Personal Purposes, what makes up evidence of assessment? Is it one of the occasions of accessing one text type, or is it three text types, or is it three occasions of three text types? If you are teaching two levels in the one class this makes moderation a long and arduous task. We opted for evidence that shows where two text types have been accessed on two occasions.

Still on assessment, it was our intention to use a folio of student work as evidence, but it has proved too unreliable and too difficult to keep a record of the criteria each student has addressed on a number of occasions. It has proven too problematic to provide evidence for all the criteria without having an assessment task. So we have resorted to checklists and assessment tasks.

Implementing the new CGEA has been challenging, and has taken many meetings and much preparation. Most interruptions to our program have occurred at an administrative level rather than at a teaching level, as students have not commented on the transition. In fact, I don't think they have noticed! However to be AQTF-compliant, we did inform them. Early in term four we are planning an external moderation, which will be a welcome opportunity to compare notes with others.

Jacinta Agostinelli works at the Glenroy Neighbourhood Learning Centre.

# What's Out There?

With the demise of the ARIS Bulletin and its reviews of educational texts and literacy-related teaching materials, *Fine Print* decided to run an occasional review of books and resources. Robyn Hodge talks about a Melbourne-based group of adult educators who have published a collection of writings about their experiences, and Debbie Soccio looks at a series of five books featuring real-life stories supported by black-and-white photographs, designed for adult and ESL learners and secondary students with lower-level literacy.

## Fancy Footwork: adult educators thinking on their feet

This extraordinary collection of writings is a result of weekend discussions and subsequent reflections by a committed group of adult educators based in Melbourne. A collective of nine women met regularly from May 2005 until earlier this year (2007) to discuss, argue, articulate and capture ideas and issues in adult education of importance to them. Seven of the nine women contributed written pieces, others contributed to the discussions, editorials and to book production. The published work was made possible with the support of the Professional Learning Group in the Faculty of Education at Monash University and the Victorian Adult Literacy Basic Education Council (VALBEC)

The pieces have been grouped according to themes. The prologue shares the initial invitation, the rationale behind setting up the group and a sense of some of the motivations or aspirations of those involved. Sections 1–6 reveal how collectively and individually the group grappled with notions and perceptions of teaching; teaching with 'spirit'; weaving aspects of self in professional identity; creating and shaping physical and emotional spaces for learning; transformation; the art of teaching and learning in action; and bodies and/of knowledge.

*Fancy Footwork* is a perfect description of the complexity of what happens in teaching and learning, and in describing the process by which this complexity is captured in each of the pieces. In the early contributions, I feel the different authors carefully negotiating their place and purpose—a polite foxtrot, perhaps. The same validation is given to each contributor as would be afforded to any new group of learners: no ideas or thoughts excluded, fulsome inclusive, definitions shared. Further into the book there is less foregrounding of what it is each wants to say and a celebration in the saying of it—imagine a rousing waltz.

Like any collection of writings, readers will have their personal favorites, stories that in some way reflect one's own experiences. I loved Jacinta's observation of the window cleaner's artistry; this captured for her (and me) the richness of experience and the importance of naming and recognising skill in whatever it is that we do. Lynne lost a precious earring and shared some wonderful and grounding perspective on what is important. Like Liz, I've experienced the sinking feeling of losing learners disoriented by the confronting and contentious.

For me, the section on transformation generated some ambivalence, disquiet and (I confess) disagreement. Adult education can be so many things—practical, pragmatic, boring, pedantic, eclectic, subversive, ugly, messy, quick, slow or fairly uneventful. Transformation may be positive or not, but rarely achieved without discomfort and challenge. It is not always a noble achievement like that described in *Educating Rita*. The nature of aspirations and motivations of learners, no matter how prosaic, is part of the dance.

I think that the book as a unified work would have benefited from some tighter structural editing to reduce the distance between the reader and the contributors. In the early pieces there was a bit of repetition with each writer contextualising the group when it had already been managed in the introduction. This slowed my entry to the really engaging matter. Being the kind of sticky nose I am, I would have liked to read some more material that connected the Saturday discussions to the final pieces. Was there no dissension? Who picked the topics? How was consensus achieved? What did the group laugh about? Where was this group's discomfort, and why wasn't it shared? The section introductions created a distance between myself as reader and the writers. I also felt that at times I was being led by the hand through the sections. In some cases, the introductions preempted what the writers had to say, thus reducing the impact of the piece. I would have preferred that analysis at the end of the section, towards the end of the book, so I read the contributions first and read the introduction after.

It was an ambitious objective: to meet, discuss and publish a series of contributions on adult education, but it has been beautifully realised. I congratulate each of the contributors for their wisdom and commitment and their generosity in sharing their lives and work. It has been a privilege to read this book and I encourage all *Fine Print* readers, new and experienced adult educators alike, to create a learning space of their own and be transformed by what they find.

**Robyn Hodge is a former *Fine Print* editor and is on leave from her Curriculum Development Officer role at NMIT. She wrote this review in an Alice Springs Caravan Park while watching a carload of laundry flap gently in the breeze. By the time readers receive this edition she hopes to be sitting on Cable Beach in Broome.**

## Good news for adult learners

The Read Series Two is produced by Smith and Wilson and distributed by NCELTR. The series includes five new A5 books targeted at adult learners, ESL learners and secondary classes.

Real life stories supported by authentic and interesting black and white photographs make these short stories enjoyable to read. The series consists of three narrated texts, a one-act play, and a collection of poems.

*Things People Do* provides a focus on hobbies and past times that people do in their everyday lives. The text is a series of first-person accounts by individuals explaining what they like to do in their spare time.

*Blokes Can Cook* shows photographs of men and their cars (or bike or lawnmower). The blokes tell us a little about their car and then provide a recipe that they can cook (and works!).

*Driving* is the third narrative. The book included a collection of photographs around the topic of cars and a narrative around the topic of the thing we hate most about driving—the unforeseen breakdown! The images, no doubt, will generate lots of conversation starters in the classroom.

The fourth book in the series is a very funny one-act play, *What's for Dinner?* It focuses on a young son who moves out of home for the first time, and the different responses he and his parents have to this new living arrangement. It is a short four-scene play.

The final book in the series is *The Little Book of Poems*. It includes thirteen poems of various forms and styles, some illustrated with

photographs. Following each poem are comments by the poet about how or why the poem was written.

In addition to the five A5 books you have access to the Resource Book. This resource book supports the Read Series Two books, and includes word lists and activities relating to the books. They involve reading and writing, speaking and listening, comprehension and interpretation.

### Previous publications

Read Series One (2004) comprises seven titles and a resource book. The titles deal with familiar situations and topics. They range from simple collections of photographs and captions to more complex stories with a variety of text styles. Each title provides topics for discussion.

The resource book comprises work list and activities relation to all the titles in Series One. They involve reading and writing, speaking and listening, comprehension and interpretation. This series may also be useful for adult ESL students and secondary school students whose literacy level may be below that of their peers.

Both resources are distributed through NCELTR, [www.nceltr.mq.edu.au/publications](http://www.nceltr.mq.edu.au/publications) or (02) 9850 7966.

**Debbie Soccio has worked in the adult literacy field for 16 years and has a particular interest in developing blended learning programs for students who choose to study flexibly.**

### ... continued from page 18

English. I have brought to the workshops my knowledge of how to teach a song, and encouraged teachers at the chalkface to give it a go. Of course, many of them are already giving it a go, and it has been fantastic to hear about what works and why. I have had the pleasure of being invited to different workplaces and experiencing the process first-hand.

One of the hit singles of the ESL teachers' workshops has been 'Mother I Feel You' and one of the teachers described her class singing, swaying and clapping and walking in concentric circles to the music, with two parts going at once. Another teacher talked about how important it was to the students to learn Australian songs, the national anthem in particular (despite the difficulties), as a symbol of embracing their new country.

This is a new and expanding world for me!

Jane Coker, Brian Strating and I have put together a CD of nine very simple songs to help ESL teachers sing with their students. If anyone is interested in the workshops, the CD or discussing the work, I would love to hear from you. Please contact me at: [cmv@netspace.net.au](mailto:cmv@netspace.net.au).

For more information about Community Music Victoria and the ESL singing workshops, call (03) 9662 1162 or go to [cmv@netspace.net.au](http://cmv@netspace.net.au).

**Lyndal Chambers is currently working as the 'Metropolitan Catalyst' with Community Music Victoria. She runs regular workshops to pass on the skills required to lead a group of ordinary people in song. Her background is in music education and she has a long history of community music-making in regional Victoria.**

# Policy Update

The ESL Framework is due for reaccreditation in 2008. As Liz Davidson explains, users of crown copyright general and further education courses like the ESL Framework and the CGEA will be aware that reaccreditation occurs every five years to ensure currency and continuing need for curriculum.

## ESL Framework reaccreditation update

The ESL Framework is a Victorian crown copyright curriculum (nationally accredited) consisting of ten ESL certificates currently in use by TAFE and private and community providers of ESL to adults. It provides courses across three streams (Access, Employment and Further Study) at four certificate levels (AQF levels 1–4).

It offers flexibility and pathways for the range of adult ESL learners (beginner to advanced) in post-compulsory education and training. The three streams allow providers to offer courses with a general, further study or employment focus.

With funding from the Office of Training and Tertiary Education (OTTE), the reaccreditation project will begin early in 2008. It will be managed by the CMM General Studies and Further Education, Victoria University, and will be overseen by a project steering committee set up according to Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) requirements. The ESL Framework Advisory Group, which conducts moderation and PD as well as developing sample assessment tasks, has been integral to the review and redevelopment of the courses since they were first developed. It will play a key role in the reaccreditation as a critical reference group.

### The reaccreditation process

The reaccreditation will follow the national requirements for course development and accreditation. This process is managed in Victoria by the VRQA. To view the details of what is involved go to <http://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/> and search the accreditation (VET) pages. Consultations will take place in 2008 via focus groups to validate learner cohort needs.

To view the 2008 project brief, go to <http://trainingsupport.otte.vic.gov.au/curriculum.cfm?menu=3> and search for current projects under Service Industries—General Studies and Further Education.

### Building on the 2006 mid-cycle review

As part of the ‘continuous improvement’ process, the CMM conducted a mid-cycle review of the courses in 2006, which resulted in a number of changes to the core modules. Practitioners who provided feedback identified a number of aspects of the modules where more detail was required. The main area identified as needing more detail was the level of proficiency; that is, the specific skills and linguistic features that a student needs to demonstrate. A working party of the ESL Framework Advisory Group went through all of the feedback and made amendments to a number of modules.

The review information will contribute to the reaccreditation and revision of modules.

### What will change?

Until consultations begin, it is difficult to predict the extent of changes that may be required to update the courses and their outcomes. Changes can be made to course structure, such as the core/elective components, as well as to modules and units. There will be some aspects that will need to change as national accredited courses templates have altered since the last reaccreditation. The AQTF 2007 Standards for Accredited Courses will be available on <http://www.training.com.au>. An employability skills statement will be included for each of the revised qualifications.

### Professional development and implementation

A professional development program will be conducted towards the end of 2008 to introduce teachers to the changes.

### Keeping up to date

Regular news on the reaccreditation will be provided via the SICMM newsletter and via CMM email updates. To ensure you get all the latest news, subscribe to the CMM email and newsletter lists.

- ESL <https://lists.vu.edu.au/wws/subrequest/sicmm-gsfe-esl>
- SICMM newsletters: <https://lists.vu.edu.au/wws/subrequest/sicmm-newsletter>.

In addition, the SITN-Talk website will be used to update providers:

- <http://tls.vu.edu.au/cfsitntalk/main.cfm>

For more information, contact Liz Davidson and Lynne Fitzpatrick, Tel: (03) 9919 8327/ 8375; Fax: (03) 9919 8345; email: [sicmm.generalstudies@vu.edu.au](mailto:sicmm.generalstudies@vu.edu.au)

Liz Davidson is Victorian Curriculum Maintenance Manager General Studies and Further Education at Victoria University, a role she shares with Lynne Fitzpatrick. She is involved in curriculum development, professional development for FE teachers and TESOL teacher education. Liz has participated in the reaccreditation of several general studies and further education courses, including the ESL Framework and the CGEA.

# Foreign Correspondence

**'Take me to the university, please', Helen Keane asked the taxi driver when she first arrived in the ancient Chinese capital of Xi'an. Helen's mission was to hold a seven-week certificate course in English for Business and Global Communication. But first, she had to find out in which of the city's 51 universities she'd be teaching.**

## Chalk dust, photocopies, and slogans on the walls: teaching in China

Like Chinese whispers, whatever weird and wonderful instructions the 'foreign teacher' issues get spread throughout the class. Luckily, they sit with the most able at the front. Forty-nine students, aged between 21 and 23, sit in rows that seem to go back forever. The students stare at their new English teacher, who by the end of the first lesson was already wondering what had possessed her to imagine she had the skills for this job.

I have arrived in China to teach an NMIT Certificate in English for Business and Global Communication to two classes, each of 49 students, for 12 hours a week for seven weeks. Another NMIT teacher had taught the first part of the course, so they had already been warmed up or 'warned up' to some extent. Once the students have their Certificate they will go on to do a Diploma in Business English or a Diploma in Information Technology, also NMIT courses. Most of them aspire to be business people. Many want to study international business, either at a better university in China or overseas. The students come from many provinces, including Mongolia, and my university was just one of the 51 in Xi'an. Xi'an is an ancient capital of China, home of the terracotta warriors as well as many historic sites linked to the Old Silk Road.

There is no shortage of advice, previous experience stories, and details of 'what to expect', and it's all pretty accurate. There are no surprises when I met the students who are polite, keen to learn, and once you get to know them, delightful and easy to get on with. They are reluctant to participate in discussions or ask questions or challenge anything that is written. There are some that try to sleep in class (sometimes because they've been up all night playing internet games), and they will copy each other's work. They rely heavily on their digital dictionaries and are strongly attached to their mobile phones. All the ideas provided or offered to me by colleagues about resources, activities and methods were invaluable, especially for a first-timer from the literacy field.

The classroom has slogans and inspirational pictures of people such as Shakespeare, Einstein and Chinese poets glued on the calcimined walls. My main tool is a blackboard and everything is covered in chalk dust by the end of the lesson. Classes consist of two 50-minute sessions with a ten-minute break in the middle.

Student feedback was that they wanted more speaking and listening practice, so I set forth with the intention of giving them as many speaking and listening opportunities as possible. Not

being a regular ESL teacher, I didn't have a bank of ESL-specific resources so I suspect that my students did not get as rigorous attention to grammar and pronunciation as they might have.

On my third day (by which time I was already beginning to despair), I put the students into groups and gave out cooperative logic tasks (from 'Strength in Numbers') printed on coloured card. The students loved the hands-on material and the competitive element (trying to be the first group to solve the problem). I think they also loved the colours of the materials. Everything in their learning environment is bleak, from the classrooms and campus buildings to the thin, greyish paper used for photocopying.

Although they were not using much English, they at least had to read the problem in English, work out the meaning, and then explain it to me in English. The task enabled me to walk around the groups and ask questions and begin communicating with individual students. They had fun and were impatient to try more tasks. This activity made a huge difference to their perception of me, and from that point on I relaxed, they relaxed, and I began to thoroughly enjoy my teaching experience.

I made the students give oral presentations (talks) daily, and to force the others to listen, everyone had to keep a Listening Journal (handed up for marking every week). I marked every speech on my marking sheet so all the students could see me. Once they realised that they were marked, they took the task more seriously and the marks and comments helped me to assess them more accurately.

Marks and marking are an important aspect of the teaching and learning process in China. The students work hard and have long



days, so they don't want to waste time on anything that is not being marked. They are used to exams, so the idea of continuous assessment instead of exams has to be demonstrated. I always left all my marking sheets on the teacher's lectern/desk so students could see them at any time.

As well as cooperative logic tasks, I did Pub Trivia (with questions on grammar, vocabulary, revision and general knowledge—and prizes), finding partners using social English conversations (students had to walk around to find their partner, practice the dialogue and then act it out), role play, 'What am I?' games, puzzles, running dictation—anything I could think of to get students out of their seats and communicating with other students.

Every adult literacy activity is applicable as long as the reading level is more challenging. If the content of the activity can be challenging with 'knowledge' to be gained, so much the better. Competitive activities are particularly popular, and luckily I had a good supply of koalas, chocolate Freddo Frogs, postcards and stamps for prizes.

Teaching the Certificate in English for Business and Global Communication in China is challenging and tiring, but a great

experience. The students are great to work with and although the marking and reporting is a bit tedious it's a way to give students direct and immediate feedback, especially when you cannot speak fluent Chinese...or indeed any at all. Most of them developed the confidence to talk in English, to ask questions and to contribute to discussion. They appeared to enjoy the course and gave constructive feedback at its end.

The other very positive part of the experience is being able to live in China for a few weeks, get to know a city well, eat fantastic food and simply teach. There are no extra meetings, extra duties or student welfare issues. The opportunity to explore a city and nearby places such as Hua Shan Mountain, which was one of the highlights for me, is well worth all the chalk dust! Back at work at NMIT I have a much greater appreciation of our meagre resources, treasure my luxurious classroom with its whiteboard, and absolutely adore the toilet with its paper and hygienic smell!

**Helen Keane has taught literacy and English as a second language since forever, starting in South Australia, then in Malaysia, NSW and New Zealand (to Deaf adults), before arriving at TAFE in Victoria in 2001. She has also worked with people with disabilities, in theatre and in social research.**



# Beside the Whiteboard

**Dawn Doherty teaches CGEA at Swinburne and Chisholm TAFEs, and her career has ranged across the Secondary, Youth Detention and TAFE sectors. As Dawn told Fine Print, teaching Social Education in the last Friday afternoon period was an education in itself that made her entry into Corrections Education a relatively easy task!**

## **Can you tell us a bit about your professional background and career pathway?**

I commenced teaching practice at Lilydale Heights Secondary College, teaching Years 8 (both girls and boys) and Years 9 and 10 boys. Being able to cope with Year 9 boys on last period Friday put me in good stead for a later venture teaching Juvenile Justice students at Parkville Youth Training Detention Centre. I taught there for 11 years after a couple of years at Melbourne Assessment Prison. For the last 18 months I have taught in the Access Department of Swinburne and Chisholm TAFEs, teaching youths aged 15–20 years.

## **What have been your influences in terms of shaping your teaching methodology?**

It didn't take long to recognise the need to offer flexible lesson plans and programs that suit individual needs and appeal to youth. This meant designing and incorporating cross-curriculum projects such as OH & S within the flexibility of a curriculum such as CGEA.

## **What have been some of the changes you have observed in working with the CGEA over your teaching career?**

It's a long time since we changed from the original CGEA to the current (until 2007) one. I think for mainstream TAFEs the CGEA levels work well (that is, Intro, 1, 2 & 3). There are always various levels within levels, but I don't think other curriculums work as well. Of course, there's a huge gap between Levels 1 and 2, which makes it difficult for some students who pass Level 1 to complete Level 2 in a similar time frame.

In working with ESL or similar groups, CGEA is not really appropriate because there are many with skills at pre-Intro level. The new CGEA 2008 would cover this with the Initial level, so it's good to see a widening of the scope of people to whom we can deliver literacy and numeracy skills within the CGEA.

In a corrections environment, the CGEA was a difficult curriculum because the total number of hours was often not achievable. Prisoners are often sent to various other locations after a short space of time, so it is difficult to complete all the learning outcomes in any module. However GCO offered tremendous flexibility for writing short courses which could be completed within a shorter space of time.

## **What have been some of the challenges and highlights of working in adult literacy education?**

Teaching young people is a challenge and so is maintaining their interest in a literacy program. A highlight is to keep the students attending for a full year, especially if they complete all the learning outcomes and are ready to tackle a new year in VCAL, apprenticeships, or other vocational courses.

## **How did you become involved in adult basic education?**

It was quite by accident! I applied for a job with Kangan Batman TAFE without realising that I would be working in a correctional facility. When I heard 'those gates' closing behind me, I realized a momentary feeling of terror! However, I survived.

## **What advice do you have for new teachers?**

Have your lesson well planned. Make the students aware from day one, of your expectations and boundaries. Be flexible and if a lesson doesn't work, have a 'back-up'.

## **What have been some of your best teaching experiences?**

I must have enjoyed working within the Youth Unit at Melbourne Juvenile Justice Centre. I stayed 11 years! In that time I was able to introduce Distance Education for those students who were keen to further their education to Years 11 and 12.

## **What are some of the challenges of working with younger students?**

Maintaining their interest in what you're offering. I think it's important to gain their respect, especially when many of them have experienced troubled mainstream schooling.

## **What role has new technologies played in your development of teaching and learning strategies?**

Developing and adapting lesson plans for use online, and providing students with a venue to express their creativity through computer software such as Publisher and PowerPoint.

## **What do you see as the main issues for ALBE practitioners in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?**

I think we have to recognise that computers and mobile phones are more important and real to students than writing and develop our lessons accordingly. Youth especially, are very proficient at using computers and respond well to any lessons they can do online.